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Site-Specific Performance
and
The Mechanics of Becoming Social

Stephen Joseph Fossey

A Doctoral Thesis

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

School of Media and Performing Arts

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Abstract

This thesis offers a body of practice that includes video documentation of one to one performances, performance lectures, critical writings and first person reflective narratives that give new insights into the potential of site-specific performance art and social space. Key themes, questions and concerns across performance studies and the social sciences are explored through a practice as research trajectory. From performance studies Nick Kaye's (2000) writing on site-specificity provides a point of departure for methods of making and writing about performance that I refer to as 'mechanics'; the term mechanics is posited within a process of what is described in the thesis as 'becoming social' and articulates a sense of what social scientist Doreen Massey might describe as 'throwntogetherness' (Massey, 2005). Anthropologist Marc Augé's (1995) concerns around the prevalence of non-place are challenged and interwoven with Massey's optimistic calls for spatial rethinking to answer the key research question: how can becoming social be framed as a site-specific process when realised through particular performance mechanics? The thesis speaks broadly to this question whilst exploring subthemes, questions and concepts. The confessional potential of body language (Howells, 2011) is explored as personal histories are exchanged between strangers in an exploration of 'autobiographical' (Heddon, 2010) performance that encourages the materialisation of what psychologist Charles Fernyhough (2016) refers to as the voices within. Interrelationality, intimacy, proximity, place and social space are explored, with concepts of hosting, caretaking and hospitality mobilised in performance materials that are both positioned as experiments *and* research findings. These findings give new insights into performance art and offer a timely alternative way of becoming social that performs and practices space as a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005: 9).

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Site-Specific Performance and the Mechanics of Becoming Social

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Performance Practices Submitted as Part of the Thesis:

1. Performance Works

- i. *Redefining a Sense of Place*, performance lecture, recorded at the University of Northampton, UK, 2011.
- ii. *Performing Criticism*, performance to camera, Nottingham, UK, 2011.
- iii. *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space*, performance lecture, recorded at the University of Northampton, UK, 2011.
- iv. *Walking Through the Field*, performance lecture, recorded at the University of Northampton, UK, combined with performance to camera recorded in Nottingham, UK and still images created at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Bretton, UK, 2011.
- v. *Falling in Love Again - and Again*, video collage of performance in Wolverhampton City Centre for the *Interactivity/Interpassivity* Conference, University of Wolverhampton, 2013.
- vi. *Hello, I Love You*, one to one performance, recorded at Embrace Arts Centre, Leicester, UK, 2013.
- vii. *What's So Funny About Piss, Blood: An Understanding?*, audio/video extract of performance lecture, recorded at the Mostyn Oriel Gallery, Llandudno, Wales, 2011.
- viii. *Host*, one to one performance, Nottingham, UK, 2013.
- ix. *Host(s)*, performance, Nottingham, UK, 2014.

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- i. *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space*, p.17, image courtesy of the artist.
- ii. *Walking Through the Field*, p.19, image courtesy of the artist.

- iii. *Hello, I Love You*, p.21, image courtesy of Julian Hughes.
- iv. *Host (s)*, p.22, image courtesy of Julian Hughes.
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Introduction

This thesis argues for and realises a performance practice that articulates a ‘mechanics of becoming social’, produced within a site-specific art framework. Through the development of performance strategies, which I hereafter refer to as mechanics, this thesis adds new insights into the relationship between site-specific performance and social interrelationality. The term ‘mechanics’ can be defined as the ‘basic methods, procedures, technique, or details of something’ (<http://www.dictionary.com>). The verb ‘become’ means ‘begin to be’, with its origins in the ‘Old English *becuman*’ meaning ‘come to a place’ or ‘come (to be or do something)’, and the adjective ‘social’ means ‘relating to society or its organisation’, with its origins in the word ‘*socialis*’ meaning ‘allied’, which comes from ‘*socius*’ meaning ‘friend’ (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2016). By foregrounding the idea of mechanics as methods within a ‘mechanism’ which can be defined as an ‘assembly of moving parts performing a complete functional motion’, (<http://www.dictionary.com>), this thesis presents performance ‘methods, procedures and techniques’ that organise the coming into being of social allies in complete functional motion; interrelational friends linked through thought, conversation, fantasy and reality.

There are core research questions and conceptual concerns that motivate the production of this thesis. The first overarching question that frames the thesis asks, how can the concept of becoming social be framed as a site-specific process when realised through particular performance mechanics? The thesis as a whole speaks to this question, but with this there are two sub-questions: 1. How, through positioning site as a process rather than fixed location, can the material of place, space and human experience become imbricated to produce new insights into interrelationality? and 2. What does this imbrication reveal about the potentials of intimacy and proximity in the context of site-specific performance and social space? These questions dictate the structure of the thesis which can be understood as being formed of three chapters.

The key theoretical points of departure that each chapter builds from can be seen in more detail below in point 2 of Sites of Articulation, but as a general overview the chapters function as follows: Chapter 1 establishes the key theoretical territories that frame and support the material in Chapter 2. The emphasis of Chapter 1 is on place and theorists and practitioners who speak broadly to this theme. Chapter 2 then focuses on the instability of

place as a main theme of enquiry, with material here expanding through practice the critical field presented in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 focuses on theorists and practitioners who speak broadly to themes around intimacy, proximity and confessional modes, whilst still referencing those that informed place in Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 3 develops concepts around intimacy, proximity and the confessional using the contextual underpinning of these key concepts to support the practice. Each of these chapters speak to the main research field of site-specificity, social becoming and interrelationality, with my practical performance offerings speaking to and building from the concepts and practices of the thinkers and makers interwoven into the thesis.

0.1

Sites of Articulation

To answer the questions posed above, the thesis is composed of a series of elements, or, to appropriate the multi-voiced approach of Lee Miller and Bob Whalley, ‘multiple sites of articulation’ (2010: 222), which work together as a whole. These are:

1. Performance Investigations

The research was carried out through a series of performance investigations. These investigations encompass reflective writings, performance works undertaken with the public and performance lectures. These investigations are often developed in an iterative mode that combines, overlaps and enfolds material that has gone before. This purposeful method of re-iteration keys into a conceptual concern that positions material documents as interlinked with what went before and what may come after. Rather than artworks being presented as standalone ‘finished’ pieces, they should be read as amorphous materials that are prone to slippage, which, I argue speaks to my broader positioning of site and social space as a process. This conceptual concern allows social space and site-specificity to be open to spilt matter from other agents, materials, subjects and objects which allows and encourages moments from one ‘event’ in time and space to be present (through re-iteration) in another. A deeper unpacking of broader conceptual framing can be read in my positioning of the theorists that support my research seen below briefly in this introduction and in more elaborated form as the thesis unfolds.

The video documentation of the practices presented operates in several ways, with documentation speaking to conceptual concerns around interrelationality discussed below. The video documentation often has a low-fi quality, this is a deliberate method produced by purposefully asking audience members to assume the role of camera-person moments before the performances begin. This method of documenting operates conceptually as an interrelational mode of bringing together artist and audience-participant and speaks to ideas around care and responsibility, themes that thread through the thesis and which are given emphasis in Chapter 3. This interrelational mode of documentation is employed to both add a layer of incidental interactivity to the works, and to provoke a voyeuristic quality to

performances where a sense of voyeurism is important to the conceptual concerns of the work. The videos are both documents that capture performances and performative artefacts in themselves that, in some cases, have been edited to include text and sound, becoming montages of performance experiments rather than being footage of just one ‘complete’ performance.

The use of the term interrelational in this context of ‘using’ an audience member as document-maker raises initial concerns with the ethics of interrelationality and engaging with participants, something I will discuss here briefly. Specific attention to the ethics of engaging with participants and documenting them will be attended to as the thesis unfolds, but for the moment I would like to briefly think about the artist and audience-participant relationship as I position the camera person as an audience-participant with a role to play. In *Towards an Ethics of Intimate Audience*, a 2012 article published in the journal *Performing Ethos*, Helen Iball refers to *Theatre Personal: Audiences with Intimacy*, which is an ongoing project launched in 2009 to research contemporary audience participation in the United Kingdom (Iball, 2012). Iball observes how the project has a ‘determination to work *with* – rather than solely writing *about* – key practitioners’ and how it employs ‘case studies of audience-participant experiences, rather than just relying on the scholar’s own experiences or those of arts journalists’ (Iball, 2012: 42).

Whilst this thesis does not focus its attention on the case studies of audiences’ experiences, it is concerned with an ethics of what I will call a ‘with/about’ approach to engaging with participants. This is to say that whilst much of the focus of the reflective writing is *about* my audience participants, I explore the agreements of working *with* them and what it is to ‘be with’ those in my processes of becoming social. This approach seeks to ‘resist the binary of active/passive’ positions of artist and audience member (Miller and Whalley, 2017). In the context of the act of ‘giving’ the camera to an audience member a gift is implied, and it is in this gifting that both generosity and trust are established between artist and audience-participant. This act also demonstrates to other audience members and would-be audience participants that there is a camera present that is documenting the workings of the performance. I take the risk of having the documentation ‘fail’, leaving me with little visual evidence of my performance investigations. The gift of responsibility is a two-way contract between me and a single audience-participant that relies on a tacit agreement that she will ‘take care’ of the recording for me. My trust in her demonstrates the importance of my participants in my work, and rather than them being passive to the work, they become active

in the making of its archive. This gesture also signals to other audience members that there is an agreement of trust between artist and audience, one that could destabilize the documentation of the work at any point. As each piece unfolds, and where necessary, I will address the specific approaches to ethical consideration, both in interaction and documentation, but for now I would like to begin to think about what my video documents ‘do’. I position them as performative artefacts that contain performative moments.

I acknowledge that the term performative is much contested and used frequently in performances studies, and my usage will be discussed early in the written part of the thesis with attention paid to linguistic philosopher John Langham Austin’s Speech Act theory from *How To Do Things With Words* (1962). I would, however, briefly acknowledge the influence of writers who have contributed to the contestation of the term performative and who my usage owes a debt to. Richard Schechner in *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985), Victor Turner in *The Anthropology of Performance* (1988) and Baz Kershaw in *Dramas of the Performative Society: Theatre at the End of its Tether* (2001) all serve to support my positioning of the term performative alongside Austin, Jacques Derrida (2002) and Judith Butler (1988). I will elaborate on how I use this term, but briefly and broadly speaking at this point, I use the term to describe the moments that cause a rupture in my interactions with others. These moments, (or performatives), are reworked to become performance materials as texts, videos and other documents to articulate the moments of performativity.

2. Conceptual Concerns and Practitioner Support

The research is underpinned by theorists and practitioners across the arts and social sciences who can broadly be understood to work with ideas and practices of social space, dialogic practice and relationality which I hereafter refer to largely as interrelationality, the ‘inter’ being used to emphasise the connection between subjects in relationality. In discussions around place in Chapter 1, Doreen Massey figures prominently from a human geography perspective, speaking to my conceptualisation of social space, site-specificity and interrelationality. Massey’s writing in *For Space* (2005) calls for a way of thinking spatially that inspires the trajectory of Chapter 1, but also of the thesis as a whole. It is through the examination of Massey’s ideas of spatial togetherness and social interconnectedness that the performances I present are born. Marc Augé’s writings on place and non-place brings an anthropological supporting position to my challenge to ideas around shifts in cultural

consciousness through an overabundance of information. It is in challenge to Augé that I develop performances that embrace spatial excess, thus reframing Augé's concept through conceptual concerns of my own that imagine spatial excess as liberating and full of social potential.

Charles Fernyhough's *The Voices Within* (2016) supports a practical exploration of inner voices using a perspective from the field of psychology to frame the concept that dialogue with one's own inner voice can be understood anew through mobilisation in performance practice. The action that results from thought sees the thought act concept explored in Chapter 2, with concepts of failure developed in practice as others act when the performer appears to need to be taken care of. Here inner thoughts are manifested in both written texts and physical actions. The process of bringing one's inner thoughts recorded in one place and presenting them to an audience in another is framed by site-specific arts discourse – a prominent driver of the research – with performance scholar Nick Kaye's writing used as a point of departure here. The work of contemporary theatre makers Forced Entertainment figures in foregrounding the idea of site as a process rather than fixed geographic location, with Kaye providing a critical frame here as the palimpsest is introduced as a metaphor, and a nomadic approach to social interrelationality is adopted with reference to Rosi Braidotti's thinking around subjectivity. Grant Kester's writing on socially engaged practices converges with Nicholas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) to challenge ideas around face to face contact and interrelationality in Chapter 1, with this convergence continuing into and supporting Chapter's 3 explorations of intimacy and physical proximity to others.

Themes of intimacy and proximity become more prominent as the thesis progresses through Chapters 3. Here, performance scholar Deirdre Heddon's writings on autobiography and performance are threaded through artists and writers concerned with confessional practices and intimate interaction. These include Vito Acconci, Adrian Howells, Claire Hind, Michael Pinchbeck, Traci Kelly and Owen Parry. Sophie Calle is discussed alongside Acconci, as concepts and practices around voyeuristic interrelationality are explored and Kester and Bourriaud's theories are provoked. Concepts of hosting and caretaking are developed in Chapter 3, developing concepts of failure introduced in Chapter 2. The acknowledgement of the ethics of intimacy and physical proximity are explored; Howells supports the research here, with confession through body language being a prominent part of Chapter 3's

trajectory. In summary, the thesis moves practically through theoretical territories that position site as a process and space as a network of places, times and encounters whose specifics are positioned as part of a process of becoming social.

3. Thinking out loud on the page

The thesis is structured in a way that deliberately takes the reader on a drift through video and text documents and competing writerly voices and musings. The mode of a narrator who thinks out loud on the page is used as a research strategy to both elucidate the research being analysed, whilst also creating text-based material that is positioned as performance writing in itself. It is my intention that the reader will engage with these modalities in linear fashion, but where elucidation is necessary or when the text become thicker and the narrative drifts, I foresee the reader returning to the video documentation with a view to reminding herself of the intention to drift.

Performance Mechanics: Introducing the Conceptual Framing and Practical Outcomes

The performance experiments produced through this research purposefully seek to develop concepts of site that open new readings of social becoming and interrelationality. This is achieved through the creation of outcomes that combine movements, gestures, thoughts, actions, uses of technology and modes of communication that question the potential of our ‘thrown-togetherness’ (Massey) and which operate across times and places whose temporality and spatiality are purposefully presented as uncertain. I draw the reader’s attention to specific examples of these mechanics and outcomes within my analysis below. It is my intention that the reader of this thesis uses the supporting video documentation in a way that suits her. This is to say that she is encouraged to revisit the documentation of practice to elucidate the writing whenever this feels appropriate or helpful. As a rule, I would encourage you to access the accompanying material as each piece is introduced.

The methodological framework the research operates in brings together perspectives from performance studies and the social sciences in a multi-modal approach to practice as research. Following a practice as research model that places an importance on, as Henk Borgdorff acknowledges, ‘the central place *art practice* occupies in both the research process and the research outcome’ (Borgdorff, 2011: 57). Creative practice here is both the method and the findings of the research, therefore the performance documents, critical analysis and performative writings are at one and the same time experiments, tests and realisations of the methodology, underpinned by concepts developed across the outlined contextual territories. Within the methodology, a reiterative approach to the gathering, interpreting and explication of material is employed as a deliberate method used to layer, rework and (re)present findings. An experimental and improvised approach to the making of performance was undertaken alongside a strict set of aims leading to an analysis produced both immediately after the performance events *and* during the writing-up of the thesis. Reiteration, as I will go on to discuss further, lays the foundation for the practical findings the research produces, but at the same time seeks to destabilise senses of fixity and stability of place, author and event. The findings produced respond and speak to the questions and themes outlined above, the first of which is place.

Place and space can be seen as the first key terms within my process of exploring becoming social through performance and form the basis of Chapter 1's discussions. I would like to remain purposefully open with regards to how place and space are defined as the discussion begins here, allowing an interchangeability of the terms to upset definition and keep my conceptualisation fluid. Place and space are not positioned as mechanics per se, however the phenomena within them that becomes material which leads to actions is. These phenomena could be a fleeting moment of eye contact with a stranger in a café, the action of walking with others through the city, or the placing of a spoon into the mouth of someone you have only just met. The place of the mechanics that I produce will be examined, and it is in and through this examination that I propose a reimagining of the relationship between site-specific performance and social interrelationality occurs, with place ceasing to be a geographic location and proceeding to be a factor (or an event as Massey might have it) in a conceptual process of space. Some clarity will be brought to my deliberate terminological disruption through Massey who writes both about space and place, but whose writing allows spills and encourages overlaps. An initial definition of space can be read through Massey below.

In the opening propositions of *For Space* Massey proposes that 'we recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny' (Massey, 2005: 9). In my mobilisation of Massey's theories, I articulate the dynamics of interrelations and interactions on both micro and macro levels, inviting the recognition of the 'product' that Massey refers to as space to be reconsidered through performance. The material introduced below takes a conceptual position that asks what Massey's 'product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny' might look like when realised in practice, and what its practical performance outcomes might offer readings of site-specific performance and social space.

Chapter 2 shifts toward how these concepts are developed in the practice. *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* (2011), *Re-defining a Sense of Place* (2011), *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* (2011), *Performing Criticism* (2011), and *Walking Through the Field* (2011), all speak to the research question: 'how, through positioning site as a process rather than fixed location, can the material of place, space and human experience become imbricated to

produce new insights into interrelationality’? These works use communicative technologies and mechanics of relational performance to rethink the connectivity between people, places and experiences. Their mechanics cause unstable readings of location, employing reiteration, compositional awkwardness, technological uncertainty and improvised participation.

A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact is presented as a piece of writing that sees fieldwork notes reworked to produce a performance text. The process of reworking the fieldwork notes reveals knowledge of the initial experiences of being in a place that comes to being in the act of reworking and reflecting on the page. This is a deliberate research strategy that positions both the author, the reader of the text, and the people being written about in the text in a process of being together, a situation I position as social. Here a concept of interrelationality is made manifest in practice as subjects become interconnected through:

1. the process of observing and writing: (*me*, as the author/researcher watching and writing about *them* – the others)
2. the process of reading the text: (*you*, the reader of the text reading that which is written about *them* – the others)
- and
3. the process of being observed and written about (*them*, the people being observed, written about and then read about as the text reaches *you* the reader).

Whilst existing as a text in its own right, *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* also becomes supporting material for *Redefining a Sense of Place*. Key moments from the initial observations and experiences that informed *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* are reworked in front of a live audience in *Re-defining a Sense of Place*. Here my concept of the ‘thought act’ is introduced. This concept, which will be discussed more broadly in Chapter 2, speaks to concepts around performativity and the phenomena that results from thought. Fieldwork material comprising video, audio and text recorded over a series of visits to the café are woven together through the mode of the performance lecture. Through this mode, traditional methods of academic conference paper delivery are combined with improvised streams of consciousness and memory recall that develops the potential of the performance lecture. These two works establish reiteration as a layering method where experiences are written about and retold to an audience with the addition of improvised streams of consciousness to give further layers to an initial experience in social space.

Seen as a set of formal mechanics within one piece, *Re-defining a Sense of Place* synthesises fieldwork notes that are used in performance as texts, and which are improvised with alongside video and audio projection of documentation of the place the fieldwork notes were made. Video and audio documentation of my audience's criticism of *Re-defining a Sense of Place* is recorded and then reworked and edited to create *Performing Criticism*, a further example of the reiteration of material from previous fieldwork and previous performance. This piece is presented as a video document of a performance to camera where I read along with the amplified voices of my audience's vocal criticism of *Re-defining a Sense of Place*. The piece consisted of a video that was projected onto the wall of the performance space behind me, capturing my facial reactions to the criticism I received after performing *Re-defining a Sense of Place*. Through the combination of this projection and my voice reading alongside the voices of my audience, questions of activity, passivity, authorship and agency are purposefully posed. The mechanics established here place the performer at a distance from the audience, the voices of whom he interacts with to both understand his earlier performance *and* the people he has been speaking about as he reads his fieldwork notes. *Performing Criticism* asks broader questions of proximity which are explored further in *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space*.



Figure 1. *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space*, (2011)

Finding Forms in Dialogic Space expands concepts around layering begun above, weaving together fieldwork material, video, audio and text through the mode of the performance lecture once more with additional layers of projection and improvisation defying stable senses of author and location. Again, traditional methods of academic conference paper delivery are combined with improvised streams of consciousness and memory recall, this time however there is the addition of the live Skype video-feed. The place being discussed can be seen by the audience here in real time, and in addition to this projection there is also a live-feed of the audience. The piece continues to develop concepts concerned with activity, passivity and authorship, with broader questions of participation and proximity played out through various moments of interaction which I position as performance mechanics. The term interaction purposefully becomes amorphous here as audience members intervene/interact to rescue the piece when it begins to fail technologically.

It is here where the concept of the thought act is introduced and developed, and where ideas around the deliberate manipulation and management of failure in performance is first explored. Sociologist Erving Goffman supports the positioning of failure here as I create performances that fail in the way I have framed above. It is in the tension between when the performer encourages the performance to fail and when the audience-participant intervenes to rescue the failure that is tested here. This conceptual concern, in addition to those of locational instability and authorial layering, is with the interaction between the performer and audience members and the moment one becomes an audience-participant through the desire to take care of a failing event. In Chapter 3 Philosopher Susan Melrose and her term ‘expert intuition’ is used to support experiments in the performer’s ability to ‘know’ how failure should be managed and manipulated, developing further the concerns of Chapter 2’s concepts.

Walking Through the Field picks up these themes, employing the same mechanics of layering and reiteration to further develop the conceptual concerns that question who is participating in the work. This positioning of participation can be understood as social and interrelational. Presented here as a video, *Walking Through the Field* combines separate but interrelated moments of performance that are composed to speak to ideas of multi-locatedness.



Figure 2. *Walking Through the Field*, (2011)

Walking Through the Field is used as a title to describe the body of material connected to this part of the research, the video document itself comprises elements from a performance lecture, still images from downloaded GPS data during a collaborative walk, and footage from a performance where these GPS images were projected onto my moving body. All these elements should be read as performance mechanics where the material of experiences with others is made manifest through the performance lecture, the act of writing about experiences with others, the projecting of drawings of walks made with others onto my body, and so on. The video document is also heavily supported by descriptive, diaristic text that leads the reader through the making of the work in an often-monotonous manner. This is a deliberate ‘thinking out loud’ strategy designed to take the reader on a journey with me, with a view to evoking some of the same anxieties of social orientation I experienced in the making of the work. This piece offers mechanics which *Walking Through the Field* develops as Chapter 2 concludes.

In Chapter 3 concepts that question how the potentials of intimacy and proximity might be revealed by imbricating place, space and social experience are explored. This part of the thesis begins with *Falling in Love Again – and Again* (2013) which was a participatory performance experiment that took place in Wolverhampton city centre, and whose mechanics are presented here as reflective writings, text messages and oral testimonies which are edited together to create a short video. *Falling in Love Again – and Again* should be read as the title of a body of material that comprises both the video document, text messages taken from the

performance experiment, and the creative reworking of audience criticism that is formed as a text alongside this other material. This piece sees the line between researcher, participant and audience blurred, with proximity explored through voyeuristic modes and technological confessions. The beginning of Chapter 3 continues to explore intimacy and proximity across a greater physical distance than that seen in Chapter 2. However, *Falling in Love Again – and Again* sees the introduction of a direct requirement for participants to activate the piece, with the dynamics of proximity questioned through elements of observation, interaction and voyeurism.

From *Falling in Love Again – and Again*, Chapter 3 then presents *Hello, I Love You* (2013) and *What's So Funny About Piss, Blood: An Understanding?* (2012) where proximity and intimacy are explored through reducing the distance between performer and participant. The exploration of methods of being face-to-face but still at a distance is seen here, with mobile phone technologies used to question proximity and communication. Personal histories are once again exchanged, with love, a recurrent theme, being introduced and used as a shortcut to intimacy. *Hello, I Love You* was a live one to one performance, but is presented here as a condensed video document of the piece. The piece sees the mechanics of memory recall employed alongside the intimate exchange of personal histories as a method of becoming social.

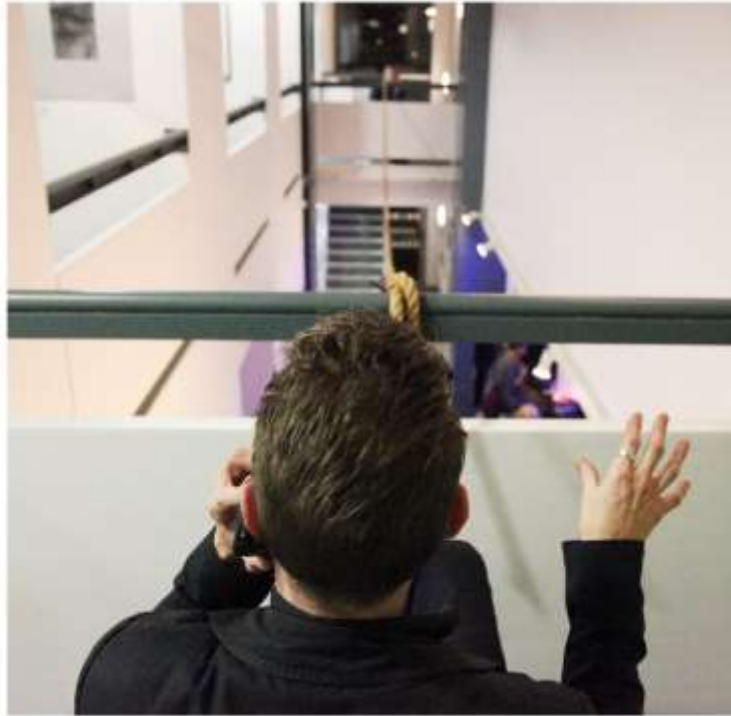


Figure 3. *Hello, I Love You*, (2013)

Chapter 3 concludes with *Host* (2013) and *Host(s)* (2014), where face-to-face interactions and intimate gestures with strangers are played out, and hand feeding is introduced as an action to foster intimacy and explore confessional modes of performance. These mechanics see the border of one's body transgressed as food is placed in the mouths of strangers by the artist. Reiteration still figures as a performance mechanic, with some of the same personal histories exchanged in previous performances once more exchanged here. *Host* is presented through video documentation of the live performance, whilst *Host(s)* is presented as a series of still images montaged together with a narrative recorded as a voice over. The narrative is my recollection of the event itself which was a live performance in a city street in Nottingham. Both pieces are part of a connected enquiry that sees personal histories exchanged for food, as trust is fostered between strangers.



Figure 4. *Host(s)*, (2014)

Personal histories and intimate details of strangers are exchanged in Chapter 3 across varying degrees of proximity, with spaces for the coexistence of social histories, layered facts, fictions, pasts and futures produced. These performances create exploratory situations where the richness of our differences, histories and colliding trajectories can be revealed and understood as part of a site-specific process.

0.3

Concluding the Introduction

The reiterative and repetitive nature of the elements within the thesis seeks to destabilise readings of locational stability and place. Performance, place and documentation overlap in the presentation of reworked fieldnotes, video documents of performances, and edited video documents that become montages of key research investigations. The thesis is a multi-modal presentation of body of research whose concepts are concerned with asking how becoming social can be framed as a site-specific process when realised through particular performance mechanics. Using a narrative register in which theory/practice and academic

discourse/poetics blur, the writing, like the practice, is interpersonal, intimate and playful. In this process, there is a danger we will get lost along the way as we go off on tangents whilst doing our best stay on track, so if at any point you feel that you aren't following me – here's my number just in case.

07398 762808

Chapter 1

1.1

The Embrace of Stories So Far: Place, Space and Instability

To begin Chapter 1, I would like to return to Massey whose propositions inspired the questions this chapter begins to ask. Massey proposes that ‘we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity’ (Massey, 2005: 9). Massey’s ‘sphere of coexisting heterogeneity’, evokes a way of thinking spatially where the potential to connect the disparate narratives that exist within our distinct trajectories opens up. Her proposition that ‘[p]erhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (2005: 9), foregrounds this thesis’ practical imagining, with the notion of ‘simultaneity’ supporting the exploration of becoming social and my proposition that social space is ‘always under construction’ and ‘always in the process of being made’ (2005: 9).

Becoming suggests a non-linearity that, when applied to notions of site, creates a tension for specificity and stable definitions of place. This thesis embraces this tension and uses this locational fluidity to suggest that the meanings of social interactions, the authorship of thoughts and comments, and the stability of our histories can be scrutinised through arts practice. This scrutiny’s agenda has modes of interrelationality at its heart, where slippage and indeterminacy are realised in practice.

The indeterminacy of place and a slippage of specificity can be seen in Massey’s comment that,

places are collections of (those) stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. Their character will be a product of these intersections within that wider setting, and of what is made of them. And, too, of the non-meetings up, the disconnections and the relations not

established, the exclusions. All this contributes to the specificity of place'.
(Massey, 2005: 130).

The 'articulations within the wider power-geometries' that Massey refers to should be read in the context of this thesis as the forces that govern and shape our shared social space, and the statement that '[t]heir character will be a product of these intersections' implies a creative potential for that gives my research its impetus; I actively seek to expose this character. Massey provokes a social potentiality of place where one can navigate the 'wider power-geometries' and produce an interrelationality that celebrates the richness of these 'stories'. It is this provocation that my research picks up. To think about site, space and place in relation to Massey's 'intersections', 'contemporaneous pluralities' and 'wider power-geometries', the term site, as a multiplicitous concept, needs attention.

1.2

The Slipperiness of Site

The term site-specific has become problematic in terms of its qualification, so I begin here with a broad field, the definitions of which are both interchangeable and often contested. Furthermore, it is the contestation of the term site which I purposefully embrace. What has begun to be established is the notion that a site is not fixed geographically, therefore place and the subjects creating space in and through place defy a locational and geographic fixity. The ‘stories so far’, that Massey positions as the simultaneities of space collide and overlap creating interweaving narratives that my research teases out and uses as performance material. The very instability of site’s classification calls geographical location into question, with producers of social space in a site becoming hard to delineate with regards to their interrelationality to one another, and how these relationalities are identifiable with place. It is these ruptures and (dis)organising principles that I foreground as opening potentials for social space.

In *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (2000) Performance scholar Nick Kaye foregrounds two definitions of the term site: *substantive* and *transitive* (Onions, 1973, cited in Kaye, 2000: 1). The substantive definition of site defines site as having an ‘original or fixed position’ (Kaye, 2000: 1), with the transitive positing site as that which is ‘situated’ or ‘placed’. Later in the thesis I introduce the term ‘post-substantivity’ to describe a concept of site-specificity that is in a continual process of deferred locational fixedness, with proper, original and fixed meanings attributable to an event’s relationship with its location continually at odds with that which is placed there subsequently. To understand site in wider spatial terms as that which is fluid and connected to a multiplicity of people, events and specificities, is to understand place as altogether unstable also. For now, I want to turn to Augé’s definition of place as it provides an important framework here.

Augé defines place as that which is ‘anthropological’: ‘places of identity, of relations and of history’ (1995: 52) that have their historical signifiers on show and where social life is possible. Place as a stable concept is contested in Augé’s *Non-Place: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995) where he describes how the excessive space of

Supermodernity has led to the inhabitation of non-place, a term which can be understood differently to place and is that which is resultant of an overload of information and meaning. Places like ‘high-speed roads and railways, interchanges, airports’ (Augé, 1995: 34) become non-places through lacking the characteristics of ‘a culture localized in time and space’ (Augé, 1995: 34).

Augé argues that in our constant and excessive need to give meaning to the ‘whole of the present’ (1995: 34) we are losing our sense of place, but I argue that there is potential for a greater social interrelationality and sense of place if place is seen as multiplicitous space that embraces excesses of connectivity. Place, as perceived in this way, can be opened up to a spatial re-imagining where histories spill into one another and social trajectories collide, a notion that resonates with my reading of Massey. Here social space can be perceived as that produced through a process of being both then and now, with others we know and others we don’t; people we have been with and people we might imagine being with. Thinking of our relationships with others in this way unites us not only in the place we are in, but also the place we remember, or the place we imagine, or indeed the place *of* our imagination, where the tacit agreements of intimacy, proximity and social interaction can be rethought. There is potential for a poetics of social space in imagining space, place and site in this way, and it is this poetic potential that I am interested in developing as performance mechanics.

1.3

Embracing Spatial Excess

The poetics of rethinking social interaction in the way I propose here is echoed in Massey's description of Raymond Williams' observations of travelling across the landscape. Massey (2013) describes how Williams looks out of a train window and sees a woman clearing out her grate, and how that image of the woman performing this action is forever etched into his mind. In his imagination, that moment with that woman repeats itself as though it were stuck fast in time and space. Rather than simply moving across a flat plane, the interconnectivity of space as illustrated here, can be thought of as a movement through a myriad of stories.

The ability to imagine social space as a site-specific network of intersecting locations with people moving in and through one another allows the possibility to imagine our sociality differently through an interconnected sense of being together. In a podcasted conversation with Nigel Warburton, Massey makes the comment that 'if time is the dimension in which things happen – it's the dimension of succession, one (thing) after the other, then space is the dimension of things, being, existing, at the same time; of simultaneity – It's the dimension of multiplicity' (Massey, 2013). To conceive of simultaneity and the multiplicity of being is to encounter spatial excess, but as I propose above, rather than embrace Augé's 'disappointment', there exists the potential to celebrate this excess of meaning and possibility to the advancement of social interrelationality with others.

There are intimations of the potential of spatial excess in Augé, who, in response to a time of excessive information, and in criticism of a consequential affected consciousness, poses a challenge to ethnologists to produce an 'ethnology of solitude' (1995: 120). I read this challenge as suggestive of Augé's belief in the possibility of rethinking social separateness. By re-imagining the interconnectedness of our inter-social relations there arises the potential to think of any place as a place, with the dominance of non-place losing its grip on cultural consciousness. Here arises the potential for an ethnology that exposes the illusion of states of solitude in contemporary social space. A model of separateness begins to emerge that although not interconnecting social subjects physically, does, however, still connect people through a collective social interrelationality whose proximity and intimacy vary by degrees of

physical interaction and imagination. This ethnology of solitude is what my performances seek to explore through provoking the mechanics of interaction to welcome both face to face and potentially voyeuristic interrelationality. Before I discuss how this is done in practice though I would like to consider what this might mean in theory.

1.4

Being Together But Keeping Our Distance: An Ethology of Solitude

Augé refers to the ethnologist as the ‘person situated somewhere (his ‘here’ of the moment) who describes what he is observing or what he is hearing at this very moment’ (1995: 8). I propose that the description of what one sees or hears but keeps to oneself might represent an ethnology of solitude, and can indeed be a social practice. To position observational writing in this way evokes a voyeuristic interrelationality that needs consideration here in order to foreground later explorations and provocations of silent observation as relational mechanics of becoming social. The potential of a mechanics of social becoming to include relations of an autonomous and even voyeuristic kind positions an interrelationality where form is given to the unsaid thoughts we have about one another, where the desire to watch others is positioned as a way of becoming social. This proposition is unpacked further below where I discuss the idea of shifting ‘I’ positions in relation to the piece *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact*. My positioning of voyeuristic relations is a provocation designed to upset the predominance of face to face contact in dialogic practices as seen in Grant Kester below. I propose that an ethnology of solitude’s potential lies in the ability to conceive of our relationships with one another as more intimately connected than previously thought in the context of dialogic practice. Augé writes that we are in a time where the ‘community of human destinies is experienced in the anonymity of the non-place, and in solitude’ (1995: 120), and it is from the freeing of this negative perception of space that my research takes departure. Solitude, as I provoke it, becomes space for the individual to see herself as connected to others, even if this connection isn’t mutually agreed or made obvious.

What I am beginning to argue here is the idea that anonymity and solitude can be understood as positions from which one can imagine one’s connection to others, where interrelationality can happen in silence and from a distance. I explore this through performance by making material the thoughts that arise from our observations of others. Here there is the potential to rethink how our social selves are constructed, with performance mechanics giving one the ability to explore what it is to orient oneself through one’s veiled observations of others. This practice is something I will go on to explore in the writing and performances seen below,

beginning with key proponents of dialogic and relational art practices Art Historian Grant Kester and curator Nicholas Bourriaud.

In writing about artworks concerned with conversation and dialogue, Kester positions Bourriaud's conception of relational aesthetics as 'concerned with communication and exchange' (Kester, 2004: 10). What is foregrounded in both Kester's critique of conversational performance and Bourriaud's relational aesthetics is exchange. There is the implicit idea here that an economic mutuality must be observed for an artwork to qualify as belonging to the oeuvre of relational aesthetics. There is also something in Kester's use of language that essentialises ideas of communication and exchange, implying that those who choose not to take part are somehow excluded from the relations. In response to this I wonder what of those social subjects, or relations, who choose not to participate, or watch silently from afar making observational writings. Are these relations anti-social? I would argue that they are not.

I question how observational writing and the embodiment of a multiplicity of places can act as a strategy for the researcher to better understand place and interrelationality. This questioning can be seen in practice through each of the works I present in this chapter, all of whom use observational writing and the sharing of intimate detail as mechanics of becoming social with others – whether my audience directly, or, I propose, with those I speak about in their absence. To think about the potential of observational writing I would like to turn to writer George Perec.

Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (2010), which serves as a point of departure to lead out of this chapter of the thesis and into Chapter 2 with ideas of observation and description in mind. Perec writes of his experience of taking a position in a public square and recording the everyday comings and goings of those he observed. Rather than attempt to overly poeticise the language of place, Perec describes quotidian details as he experiences them, valuing the aesthetics of repetition and literal description: 'A greyish car whose back-right door is blue'. 'It is twelve thirty'. At the corner of the church and rue Saint-Sulpice, a man tools up before unlocking his moped, which he has chained to the bars of some sort of basement window (it's really too large to be a basement window)' (Perec, 2010: 43). This structural approach is itself an ethnographic practice that can be considered as a form of participant observation, mindful here of my proposal for a re-thinking of what constitutes interrelationality, and, by implication here, participation.

I take the position that through the practice of observing the movements of others in public places, the opportunity for the revelation of performative events occurs, supporting my argument through the appropriation of Austin's speech act theory and the use of the term performative. Through watching, documenting and exhausting the material of place, an embodiment of the layers of social space occurs where social performativity is revealed. The term performative within social performativity here is used once again to describe a moment that is revealed where social relations are transformed. What starts out as field research can become material for the potentials of place, with field research blurring as it becomes performance writing. This proposition is explored below.

Chapter 1 of the thesis has established the key thinkers and concepts. Massey's call for a spatial re-imagining has been presented alongside Kaye's positioning of an underlying concept of site that is multi-centred. Augé's criticism of spatial excess and his concerns for the social consciousness of place has been taken on as challenge to ideas of interrelationality, with the proposal for a interrelationality that includes those that observe from afar being presented and developed. The material in Chapter 2 foregrounds the convergence of these concepts, introducing other contextual supports where necessary. Broadly speaking, the material in Chapter 2 attends to the question of how, through positioning site as a process rather than fixed location, can the material of place, space and human experience become imbricated to produce new insights into interrelationality? In attending to this question each of the works in the chapter below speak to the ideas above and concerns and provocations I have established. Chapter 2 will present practical works where the reiteration of experiences is used as a mechanic to layer times and places, where each iteration distorts the stability of place through dialogue with different audiences. Through this layering there will be attention paid to overabundances of meaning and information, giving challenge to Augé's critique of place. This will key into Massey's ideas of multiplicity, as technologies are used to compose performances where the artist is present, both in person and through the video archive. Explorations of interrelationality and face to face dialogue will be tested in my attempts to get to know those I speak about whilst they are absent. Through these works I will identify performatives through the poetics of observation, bringing together Pécoc and Austin. *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact begins this process.*

Chapter 2

2.1

A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact

I would like to lead into this chapter by thinking about practitioner-scholars Joanne ‘Bob’ Whalley and Lee Miller and the moment that they first saw a bottle of urine on the hard shoulder of the motorway. This moment was identified as that which led to their PhD performance *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* (2002). Similarly, in my own work, there was a discernible event that led to a series of layers and other events that informed my research thereafter. I will discuss further the relevance of Whalley and Miller’s piece later in the thesis, but I include this moment due to its parallel with the event that disrupted my experience of place as defined by a stable location. This event exposed the ruptures in my sense of what it is to be embroiled in a process making sense of one’s social position in relation to others, giving my research aim a different sense of direction and impetus.

My research began with an aim that focused on exploring the material of being with others in sites where people socialise, and how this socialisation can be understood both *as* performance and *as* stimuli *for* performance. My initial observations of interaction in public places focused on how the dynamics of interrelationality and observation can be documented, examined, reworked and (re)performed to know more about the relationship between performance, place and the social subjects within a site. It is here where I begin to present an interweaving of first person narratives, fieldnotes and critical writing, and where the position of the researcher becomes unstable. By assuming the position of the researcher whose job it is to watch, wait and interpret data, a seemingly insignificant event allowed place to spill beyond its geographical location and evoke the potential of a networked social connectivity. This event made the parameters of time, location and site hard to locate, and as a social subject I began to question the possibilities of social interrelationality. This first moment was experienced in a café during the month of May in 2011, in Bingham, a town near Nottingham, UK.

My intention for being in the café in this first instance began as fieldwork research, conducted with a view to observing the interactions of people in public places, and to gathering video, audio and textual documentation. I had produced notes and observations in research up to this point in this café, however my written fieldwork observations up until this point hadn't contained the word 'I' much at all. My writing had echoes of Perec's approach in how I directly and descriptively listed events, with the occasional moment of questioning. The text below is an example of this, and it is at this point dear reader that I invite you to read the text in accompaniment with my voice. This audio file can be accessed via the external hard drive as the digital document entitled Observation 1.

Observation 1

'Young people aged around 19-21'

The event begins with 2 females and 1 male. Another male arrives, then another, then another. Half an hour into the event there are 2 females and 5 males.

They sit in the middle of the café and order drinks but no food. As the males arrive they all hug one female but not the other. The female that doesn't get hugged wears sunglasses on her head and begins the event confidently.

As the time passes she looks less sure of herself. She spends much of the rest of the time with her hand near her mouth. The music on the speakers keeps jumping as the cd struggles to correct itself. Nobody seems to notice.

The female that receives the hugs spends a lot of her time texting on her mobile phone. She also hugs the males during the situation and not just as they arrive.

Elbows remains on tables when individuals aren't addressing the group. The female that receives the hugs does not use the table that much at all, or her elbows.

Eventually both females leave the situation and it becomes clear that the female receiving the hugs will be leaving for a while. Perhaps that was why she is being hugged more than the others. Her parting farewell is sayonara.

The males are left alone and the dynamics of the event become more sedate.

The cd has stuck on one song and all that is audible are the words 'one hundred million years, want to stop and disappear' as they skip and repeat.

Dear reader, I also invite you to read the second text in accompaniment with my voice which can be accessed on the accompanying external hard drive through the digital document entitled Observation 2.

Observation 2

'2 mums and 4 kids: 1 boy and 3 girls'

The event begins as one of the mums uses her phone to photograph the large- scale letters on the wall. The kids all draw pictures. One of the mum's secretly video's the kids drawing so as not to alert them to the fact that they are being watched. She wants them to act naturally. One of the kids wears her sunglasses on her head. The mums drink water.

They discuss the pictures on the wall, and there are many pictures on the walls of this café. Lunch arrives and everyone eats panini's. Another mum arrives and a baby is passed over for a hold. Everyone looks at the baby and the baby looks at the little boy. The baby becomes the object of conversation and the mother of the baby becomes the centre of the situation.

One of the mums positions her phone on the table where she wants it. Then she picks it up to photograph the children sitting alone opposite. She then photographs the table by accident and tells everyone about her mistake. The baby's mother speaks of how she has just 'got rid' of her iPhone because it kept crashing, as it is really a computer after all! Photos are then shown to the group on the iPhone.

Conversation then switches back from the iPhone to the baby. The baby and the iPhone struggle for dominance. Another iPhone arrives and a video of a festival is passed around. One of the little boys goes through the phone selecting videos and photos for the group to discuss. The 3 girls look at the phone and the boy kisses his mum's arms instead of watching the videos with the girls.

The boy moves under the table but is told to come back out. The girl showing the photo is then told not to worry about photos anymore, however she continues to show them to the other mums - not her own mother however. She uses the phone as an object to connect to other mums with. She then photographs the male toilet and shows the image to the mother of the baby.

The mother of the baby becomes the focus of all the children. The mobile phone becomes the centre of the situation, relegating the baby to second place. The baby cries and is given back to the mother to be pacified. One child asks the age of the baby, subsequently to be told that it is 14 weeks old. The child then says her guinea pig is 6 months old.

The texts above read like the directions for a play, and what can be seen here are the events of everyday life unfolding as if part of a dramaturgical process, that once made into observational text take on a theatricality. Text 1 and 2, although interesting in their potential theatrical re-conception, had no moments that I perceived as performative, that is to say no single event was affective enough to divert me from observational objective description. On a separate occasion however, something *did* happen that affected my sense of my position in social space – a Miller-Whallian bottle of urine moment! This was a moment of eye contact. I will go onto further qualify my use of the term performative below, but first I would like to present the field notes that were written in response to this performative event. The text articulates the schizophrenic reasoning I encountered during the experience, and how observational fieldnotes became a textual self-analysis of conflicting voices.

Dear reader, I invite you to either read the text alone silently, or out loud. You can read the (M) part yourself and find someone else to read the (MT) part if you like, or alternatively you can call me and I will read it to/with you. If you do decide to call me, you will have to give me some time to access the text - I won't necessarily be carrying it around with me all the time.

My phone number is 07398 762808, just to remind you.

Text 3

Me (M)

Me Too (MT)

M - It is important to write what I think is happening here.

*MT - You are making attempts at being
conscious of yourself in various social states
during your time in this place.*

*M - Using thought and writing I will try and document the changes that I am aware of during
this spatial practice.*

*MT - The beginnings and ends of the
various states are interesting to you.*

*M - My aim is to be conscious of what is happening around me and be focussed in my
assessment of the effects of as many of the elements determining my ways of being social in
this place as possible.*

*MT - You hope to understand more about yourself
by documenting your states of being
social during your time in this place.*

*You hope that in conjunction
with this understanding of yourself,
you can also learn more about the place
and the operant conditioning of 'us':
we who practice this place.*

*M - I have in the back of my mind my questions, the most pressing of which is 'what is
revealed about the place I am in by the practice of the people within it'?*

*MT - You haven't written 'I' much at all
in your other recollections of this place.
The writing has been about directly
and clinically listing events,
with the odd excursion into questioning.*

*M - For what consciously seems like the first time, I feel aware of my performing self, at least
sufficiently enough to be moved to write about it.*

*MT - You did certainly begin performing
the identity of the writer,
or maybe the philosopher, or the artist?*

M - The feeling was evoked by eye-contact with someone.

*MT - You looked at her and she looked at you
and you instantly became conscious of yourself,
but perhaps not self-conscious – is there a difference?*

M - Is it bad to think that she is beautiful? I doubt it. It must be ok to think this?

MT - Is it ok to write it down though?

M - Surely to put it to print, even if only digital, is to make it more concrete? There is something here about evidence that incriminates the author.

MT - Is this just honesty?

M - Where is the harm?

*MT - The identities of many selves
are working together episodically here.*

M - There is the ego which is in the misguided belief of love in the early stages of development.

*MT - There is a married man
that suppresses the urge
of this ego
for the purposes of being married
and all that this agreement engenders.*

M - There is the Self that imagines and fantasises seemingly independently of the ego and the married Self. This Self watches her enter the toilet and imagines what is happening in there.

*MT - There are politics of abjection
involved with this fantasy it seems.*

M - I imagine her taking down her skirt and pissing. This seems fine with the sexualisation of the fantasy, however, I am waiting to see how long she spends in the toilet, and begin imagining that if she spends too long in there, she might be taking a shit, and this does not fit with the fantasy at all. I begin to think of Julia Kristeva and theories of abjection and disgust.

*MT - Your performance of 'I'
at this point
moves further inward
as you attempt to intellectualise the situation.*

M - I wonder if this sees a spatial move away from a performed subjectivity into an objectivity where my Self is less performative and less reflective of the place, and removed from the Selves performing in the earlier event?

*MT - You begin to sense the parameters
and specificities that constitute Site.*

M - There was the moment when the site process began its formation and that was an initial moment of eye-contact as I ordered coffee and it was poured for me. My conscious performativity at this point was not overtly obvious to me, but I did sense traces of it.

*MT - There was the moment where
you sat down and began thinking about your research,
but at this point you were
not performing in a way that you were conscious of.*

M - Then there was the moment of eye-contact that saw an immediate performativity. This moment produced through a series of conscious and unconscious urges.

*MT – You sensed the potential ends of
this particular event's structure
in the moment when you
became aware that you had stopped
performing and had started reflecting.*

The analysis and subsequent reworking of my social interaction deliberately seeks to articulate how the observation of an event is both constative and performative, and in turn both descriptive and affective. In *How To Do Things With Words* (1962) language philosopher Austin's concept of Speech Act theory differentiates between the constative moments where language is used to merely describe things, and performative utterances where language changes the situation and causes something to happen. I use Austinian performative utterances here to articulate how there exists the potential for observational acts to transform the way we perceive our social relations with one another. With the idea of an action of speech having an effect in mind, I was able to identify a particular moment of performativity. The speech act in this context however involved inner speech rather than that spoken. The effects and materialisation of our inner voices on our social interactions is something the material I present here seeks to explore. To give a critical frame to inner monologues, psychologist Charles Fernyhough's book *The Voices Within* (2016) provides a useful point of departure.

The proposal of the articulation of inner speech in a research context as a viable method of knowledge generation is contestable, as it would, in Fernyhough's words, 'seem to depend on the almost impossible task of introspection' (Fernyhough, 2016: 11). Fernyhough does point out however that the landscape of contemporary scientific psychological research (the field that this particular way of thinking borrows from) has changed; 'Psychologists are demonstrating that inner speech, as they term it, helps us regulate our behaviour, motivate ourselves for action, evaluate those actions and even become conscious of our own selves' (Fernyhough, 2016: 11). This framing is useful to support my argument for the validity of the material of inner speech and the consequent actions it causes. As a result of the moment of eye-contact in the café, I became aware of my performing self, at least sufficiently enough to be moved to write about it in the first person. This method of social interaction differed from my previous recordings seen in Observations 1 and 2. I became conscious of a moment when I began performing the identity of the writer, or maybe the philosopher, or the artist? The sense of feeling a self-conscious performativity was evoked by a moment's eye contact with a waitress. I looked at her and she looked at me and something about the situation changed, a thought triggered a way of being social in public and I was moved to evaluate myself or selves as it would appear here. As seen in Text 3 above, thoughts like '*Is it bad to think that she is beautiful?*' disrupted my sense of social positioning causing an inner dialogue.

This mental duality is given form in the text above where, as Fernyhough writes, ‘[T]he self speaks and the self-listens’, and in doing so ‘comprehends what is being thought’ (2016: 38). The act of documenting this shift in my sense of social space, and in particular the content of the thoughts that caused the shift, made me question my social interrelationality, and further how this experience could be understood as a performative moment within my performance of my social self. My understanding of performance involves some level of symbolic contract between performer and audience where there are tacit agreements governing the roles and expectations of both. It is worth noting at this point that I fluctuate between being performer and spectator, and it is here where what is expected from me become unclear. This begs the question, where is the performance and who are the players?

To discuss a definition of performance at this juncture I will turn to Philip Auslander’s use of Richard Bauman who sees performance as ‘a mode of communicative display, in which the performer signals to an audience, in effect, “hey, look at me! I’m on! watch how skilfully and effectively I express myself.”, a situation where ‘the performer may key the performance frame—that is, send the metacommunicative message “I’m on”’ (Auslander, 2006). The process of identifying the ‘metacommunicative’ message as Bauman describes it, and the moments when one consciously performs it, is wrestled with in Text 3 above, with attention paid to consciously noting the inner voices as understood in Fernyhough. My sense of being a social subject experienced a state of rupture and fragmentation in the café as I struggled to identify when ‘I’m on’ and when I’m not, as it were. The levels of conscious performance exposed my fragmented self and I became interested in this fragmentation as a means to articulate a process of social becoming. A process of intersecting social experiences or, to evoke Massey a ‘co-formation of trajectories’ (Massey, 2005: 138) began to evolve across multiple sites and points of exit and entry as I tried to reconcile the events ‘then’ and the events after in the act of reflection and analysis.

A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact communicates something of how, as Hubert J. M. Hermans & Giancarlo Dimaggio state, ‘subjectivity entails shifting I-positions, uncertainty, ambiguity, internal dialogues and dialogical tensions’ (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007, cited in Gillespie and Cornish, 2010: 24), and how a tension between the imaginary and the real is exposed through layers of experience, documentation, reflection, articulation and so on. Given this layering, the palimpsest is a useful metaphor to recall here to convey a site-specific construction where subjectivities are formed and de-formed through the accumulation of layers that are written and written-over. The development of the layering

that *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact*'s research produced can be seen below in *Redefining a Sense of Place*.

A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact demonstrates how fieldwork texts can perform a dual function that both documents experience and becomes an artefact of autobiography that, once delivered as a performance text, operates as material to orient the social self in space with others. This finding establishes an approach to performance research where one's inner voice can be given material form in the moment of thought, but also later as reflective voicing in dialogue with others who can be read both as audience and participants. Massey's concepts around space and the production of the social within space support a methodological framework from within which *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* operates, seeing material form given to Massey's poetic use of ideas that connect improvised narratives and personal histories across places and times, and whose non-linearity supports the development of an understanding of site-specificity reiterated through the thesis.

Augé's provocation for an ethnology of solitude converges with Massey's concepts around spatial togetherness, and is given material form in practice by demonstrating what it is to orient oneself socially through watching others whilst remaining silent, something *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* demonstrates. What began as participant observation became texts that, once reworked, can be seen to reveal moral and ethical dialogues with the self. These findings are presented as a convergence of descriptive accounts of experience and schizophrenic arguments with the self in textual form. Hermans and Dimaggio notion of shifting 'I' positions are wrestled with through a consciousness of one's inner voices, bringing together Massey's ideas around the 'unsaid' and Fernyhough's psychologies of internal dialogue. In the development of ideas grounded in Augé's proposal for a study of an ethnology of solitude, the materialisation of conflictive inner thoughts to critique the challenges of social interaction between strangers is presented as a mechanic of performance making.

Through the identification of moments of experience where one's social sense of self is disrupted by a thought or action, *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* found how Austinian ideas around performativity might be positioned as thought acts as opposed to speech acts, when attention is paid to the shift in one's sense of self during the observation of others in social space. Auslander and Bauman gave theoretical underpinning to this argument in

support of how the relationship between thought, fantasy and the material of social experience are imbricated in practice and defined in performance and performativity. *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* saw the line between performance and documentation, and the art artefact and the archive blur, positioning the composition of these materials as layers in a site-specific performance of becoming social that find further reiteration below in *Re-defining a Sense of Place*. The concept of the thought act is something I will return to below in my discussion of the piece *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* which follows on from *Re-defining a Sense of Place*, but I would like to briefly expand here on this concept.

I have discussed above how Austin's speech acts might be thought about differently to include thoughts which aren't necessarily voiced and don't become actions, rather, they become instigators of other thoughts which lead to a shift in self-consciousness. In my later discussions, I will go on to write about how the thoughts of audience members who intervened when a performance began to fail can be seen to be 'acting on a thought' in an effort to rescue the performer from failure. In this context, the thought act leads to a more overt display of action than the example of the thought act above which cannot be seen manifested in any obvious shift in physical movement in space. What I mean by this is the thought I had about the waitress caused a performative shift in my sense of self, but this shift had no attributable visual action that anyone around me could observe. In the interventionist thought act that I will discuss later, the thought leads to the action. A point of departure for the discussion around my conceptualisation of the thought act is to ask the question that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asks in her 2003 book *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, namely, '[how], in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects?' (Sedgwick, 2003: 124 cited in Whalley and Miller, 2016, 135). This is to question what one does with what one knows, or at least thinks they know. For the purposes of grounding the thought act in the research here, it is my aim to both identify the moment a thought becomes an action during a performance (in the context of the audience member intervening), also when a thought leads to another thought that shifts cognition performatively where no action is discernible (but there is an 'inner-action' all the same).

Whalley and Miller observe how Austin 'recognises that certain words have the power of doing' (Whalley and Miller, 2006: 136) drawing parallels with Sedgwick's questioning of what it is knowledge does. Where this discussion is relevant to my conceptualisation of the

thought act is in the idea that ‘certain thoughts do certain things’. In the context of my research I am interested both in how particular thoughts lead to particular actions and particular thoughts lead to particular other thoughts that the performer can identify and make performance material from. Thoughts in the context of my concept of the thought act are positioned as performative in that they ‘do’ something, and their resultant action can also be seen ‘as’ performance, being that the action of the audience member who intervenes in the performance becomes part of what ‘makes’ the performance. Whereas Austin is interested in the transformation of a situation through the vocalisation of language, I am interested in the transformation of situations through both what is vocalised and what remains silent. What this conceptualisation looks like in practice is detailed above in *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* and is expanded further in *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space*. But first, I will discuss *Re-defining a Sense of Place*.

2.2

Re-defining a Sense of Place



Figure 5. *Re-defining a Sense of Place*, (2011)

Dear Reader

At this point I invite you to access the documentation entitled *Re-defining a Sense of Place*. The video you will see is documentary evidence of a performance lecture recorded by a member of the audience who I asked for help from moments before beginning the piece.

In *Re-defining a Sense of Place*, I retold the story of being in the café to an audience and was accompanied by a video projection of everyday movements captured in the café. Edited into the video was subtitled text taken from my written accounts of being in the café, as seen in *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* above. Mixed into the video were also audio recordings of overheard conversations recorded at various times in the café. This method of technological layering accompanied by recollections of being in a particular place is a purposeful research strategy to develop ideas of *writing about* experience and *writing-over* experience as proposed above.

Using both the microphone in the performance space and my unamplified voice, I accompanied the audio-visual documents with a spoken narrative. These words relied on a process of recalling what I had experienced in the café. The presence of my audience

affected my account of the experiences in the café and added further layers to my experience, producing what I position as a social space that at once includes those in the café, me as the narrator, and those in the audience. The piece was at one and the same time a process of articulating the knowledge of experience, but also an experience of understanding knowledge in relation to both my audience *and* my inner thoughts as they were orated. A performance mechanic can be seen here as the voices within are made material through speech, and the imagination becomes a place like any other that figures in this site-specific process of layering past and present experience. The thoughts produced whilst thinking out loud during the performance of *Re-defining a Sense of Place* enacted an oral writing-over of the archival documents had been edited to produce the video element of the piece. What the experiences meant then (in the café) became imbricated with what they meant during the ‘now’ of the performance, with meaning referred and deferred through a convergence of memory, imagination and video documentation.

Ideas of writing-over can also be seen in Forced Entertainments *Nights in This City*, first shown in 1995 in Sheffield, UK. During *Nights in this City* the audience are taken on coach trip hosted by a performer from the company who acts as tour guide. During the performance, the guide describes events and locations according to a creative agenda that has little to do with site-specific historical fact, allowing the relationship between audience, place and performer to be instrumental in hijacking the seeming realities attached to the sites they encounter. This method of layering truth destabilises not only the identities of the places encountered, but also the identities of the subjects doing the encountering as they become complicit in their subscription to the ruse. As Kaye observes, the piece ‘emphasise(s) the constructed nature of role, identity and place, performing a ‘writing over of the city’ (Kaye, 2000: 8). Kaye foregrounds the palimpsestuous mechanics of the piece, describing how, as a site-specific performance, the piece ‘attempts to define itself in the very sites it is caught in the process of erasing’ (Kaye, 2000: 8).

In *Re-defining a Sense of Place* the metaphor of the palimpsest can be used to understand the process of gathering material from social experience, then adding to and building upon it. Through the practice of embodying a place and documenting experience as I did in my fieldwork in the café, then in the subsequent recomposing and performing of the material of the fieldwork as a performance lecture, an archive of a place and its histories is created and written-over.

The palimpsest and its metaphorical importance in understanding place is given support by Augé who writes that ‘place and non-place are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten’ (Augé, 1995: 79). Both *Re-defining a Sense of Place* and *Nights in this City* encourage an engagement with one’s own sense of place where, in the acknowledgement that the reality of one’s *being here* is open to creative interpretation and by extension improvisation, a sense of shared social space can be produced that allows place to feel less alien.

Forced Entertainment play a socio-political role in encouraging us to imagine a concept of place where we can consciously overlay our own histories upon the histories that we erase by virtue of our locational unfamiliarity. It is a form of *getting to know you* by way of creative dialogue, where a performer and an audience drift through space making up their shared histories as they go along. As Forced Entertainment themselves comment *A Night in This City* ‘explore[d] the different histories written in urban space — from the official and the historical to the personal, the mythical and the imaginary’ (1995), and it is this movement through fact and fiction that I position her as drifting, drifting being something I will return to later in the thesis. *Re-defining a Sense of Place* saw an imbrication of the historical, personal, mythical and imaginary, with the schizophrenic reflection seen in my fieldnotes activated in performance and the shifting ‘I’ positions that I have referred to wrestled with before a live audience.

The shifting ‘I’ positions demonstrate an inability to ever fully locate the position of one’s social self, and is resonant in Forced Entertainment’s director Tim Etchells’ comment that his performers have an inability to ‘fully inhabit the texts and gestures they perform’ (Etchells, 1996, cited in Kaye, 2000: 8). Etchells’ comments point to the difficulty of a stable embodiment of one’s subjectivity, as within these subjectivities are traces of others. Indeed, as Kaye writes, ‘[t]here’s no utterance that is not somehow a quotation of something else’ (2000: 8). Kaye points here to language’s perpetual imbrication and deferral of stable meaning. Applying this thinking to the context of social space gives agency to the imaginary and questions what fantasy can tell us about our social interrelationality.

Fantasising about others in public and retelling these details of the imagination cannot be posited as relational, or indeed social, without some discussion of the ethics of interrelationality, but this argument will be returned to and expanded in Chapter 3 where intimacy and the confessional are given greater focus. What the material in this part of the

thesis seeks to do is deconstruct place in such a way that allows interrelationality to be perceived in ways that make a case for the active participant, silent onlooker, and potentially even the voyeur. With this in mind, I would like to expand on the idea of a psychological drift through fantasy and reality, and how this might subvert the tacit agreements of place.

As a researcher, I enter places with the intention of exploring the effects of the location I am in. The agreements of the places I research have a tacit set of rules governing how the space operates. They are unsaid but understood, and there is an order based on some generally shared ethics and principles that allow the space to operate in what can loosely be described as a *right way*. The movement of individuals within a café for instance, can be said to be productive of social space in a way that maintains the order of that place, and in turn perpetuates a shared understanding of *caféness*. I begin the process of being in a place by maintaining the stability and subscribing to etiquette. However, as a method of finding out more about the stability of the etiquette of a place, I begin actively questioning how these agreements function, and how one might know more about the experience of being in place by orienting oneself in relation to others. This approach has parallels with the methods of artist Vito Acconci who describes his approach to performance as an attempt to become a ‘passive receiver’ of ‘somebody else’s action’ (Acconci, 2010). This method employs elements of improvised movement led by another. *Redefining a Sense of Place* used drifting to allow myself to be open to the possibility of traveling somewhere unexpected, revealing something about an experience with another that I was not conscious of at the time of encounter.

In conclusion, modes of reiteration saw *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* reworked into *Redefining a Sense of Place*, with the performance lecture developed as a dominant form within which to explore how documentary material and mnemonic recollections of being with others can combine to demonstrate interrelationality and social being. Textual material gathered in one performance is built into another, with part-improvised-part-rehearsed retellings of performances used to exemplify the spills of social subjectivity encountered in one’s attempts at orientation to/with others. Technologies are used as performance supports to differentiate various performance iterations, with *Redefining a Sense of Place* seeing the use video footage taken at various times in one location combine with a soundtrack edited over the top taken from another time within that space. The splicing together of video documents and *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact*’s texts saw mechanics of performance-

making develop where interruptions to readings of stable places, protagonists and authors could occur. The live retellings of intimate and private experiences in public places to audiences become confessional modes that allow awkwardness to combine with technological misuses to develop clumsy performance tactics that intentionally blur fantasy and notions of reality. Here a writing-over of place is explored to determine where fixed perceptions of experience begin and imaginary fantasies end. Ideas pertaining to the palimpsest are given material form, with Forced Entertainment's practice and concepts from Kaye, Augé, Bourriaud and Kester converging with my performance mechanics to question face to face interrelationality and voyeuristic dynamics. A tension between interactivity and inter-passivity is uncovered, with the audience becoming a crucial part of a dynamic where those absent are implicated in processes of journeying back and forth to places and times both past and present – an absent/present play off explored further below in *Performing Criticism*.

2.3

Performing Criticism



Figure 6. *Performing Criticism*, (2011)

Dear Reader

At this point I invite you to access the documentation entitled *Performing Criticism*.

To further develop practices of self-orientation through the orientation of others, I watched the video documentation of *Redefining a Sense of Place*, listening to the words that my audience spoke in criticism of the piece. I then transcribed these words to create a verbatim transcript of criticism that I could then use as a performance text. This text was read aloud as a performance to camera which also combined projected video footage of *Redefining a Sense of Place* onto the wall of the space behind me. The location for this performance to camera was a studio space in Nottingham. The voices of my critics were amplified into the space and I attempted to keep as close to the timing of the recording as I could in attempt to leave no gap between our voices as we read the words together. This method was a continued exploration of proximal values of being together and what the absence of my audience could reveal about my relationship with them.

Performing Criticism sought to explore what the same words spoken in one place might become when spoken in another, and how ideas of self-orientation might be thought through in a literal act of orientation. This literal act of orientation is seen in my struggle to keep in synch with those that are speaking about me. I have their words in front of me but still I struggle to anchor my position. The text I read contained questions, ethical concerns and thoughts of an audience who were absent through their bodies but present through their recorded voices. The piece defied a geographical fixity through the projection of one place into another, and the authorship of the words being spoken became contested through the mimicry, echoing the discussion around Kaye and Etchells discussed earlier. To work in this way is to open oneself up to the possibility of unexpected associations with the producers of our past. Things that were perhaps not known in an initial moment in an original place become evident if we invite analysis, criticism and feedback on our observations in the way I did in *Redefining a Sense of Place*. To then transcribe and perform criticism of one's retelling of one's experience is to become a passive receiver of meaning, where one's subjectivity is given form by the criticism of one's thoughts and actions.

As I write this text here, the act of writing is used as a practical method to understand myself then and there, here and now, in relation to the audience that criticised my retelling of experience. In drifting through thoughts in the café, thoughts in the performance lecture, and then the thought I have as I write this analysis, I propose that a nomadic approach to one's social position with others develops - nomadic understood broadly here in the Braidottian sense of a subjectivity moving in space with other 'inter-relational forces' (Braidotti, 2006) with whom it interconnects. I acknowledge Braidotti's broader political figuration of identity formation here, however, her thinking around the interconnectedness of ourselves to other things and people resonates with my positioning of the drift as that which connects us in mind and body, through both text and touch. Through continual movement back and forth between voices and authorships a deferring drift of subjectivity occurs.

I am interested in the potential of the material of drifting through subjectivities, whether this be the drift through a street whilst walking, or in this context, whilst sitting silently drifting between thinking and writing. This returns us to Augé's ideas around solitude, and the question of when to break the silence and enter into verbal dialogue with someone. To suggest breaking the silence and entering into dialogue implies a verbal exchange, but dialogue needs a closer reading here. I ask what it is to propose a relational social space whose participants are unclear and whose dialogue is silent, appropriating Massey's use of

the ‘unsaid’ to position a dialogue of silence. If we are to audaciously ignore the problematic semantics of silence as dialogue, an inclusive space opens, where others figure in a social connectivity that initially were not perceived as present. Here a drifting in and through the dialogic occurs.

I propose that those who remain silent and watch from afar are as much a part of a social and relational dialogue as are those perceived to be actively taking part. It is an imaginative leap to suggest that we can be in a process of becoming social with those that we don’t even know and who we just happen to be looking on at, but what if? In the same way as how Massey’s example of the Moment Williams sees a woman going about her business as he passes through the countryside on a train creates a connection between the seer and the seen, here the observational mechanics I suggest presents a connectivity that binds social subjects and allows an imagined togetherness. A dialogue is produced in the fantasy that the spectator imagines as he pieces together what he has seen and what he must invent to complete the picture.

Those whom I enter a verbal dialogue with when in a place are not singularly those who help me attempt to situate myself in the place I am observing; it is also the audiences who listen patiently whilst I recollect my experiences in later iterations. The framing of how experience is articulated is crucial to how the activity (or passivity) of those implicated in the dialogue is understood. The performative use of documentation in the practice I present reveals layers of social space, which I argue evolve through a relational process that implicates the seer and the seen within the live moment and that mediated through recorded footage. This evokes questions about how liveness, in the context of the practice I present here, frames social space. Choosing to articulate the experience of place is a deliberate strategy to research how the performer might reveal his knowledge through the recording of the event he witnessed, asking what the recollection of the event in the act of performing reveals about the performer, the audience and the event itself. An interrelationality produced through layers created in a process of recording – sharing – recording – analysing is positioned and can be understood further in my analysis of the video work of Acconci below.

In *Centres*, a 1971 performance to camera, Acconci points to the camera, trying to maintain his finger’s position in the centre of the frame provided by the camera. As viewers, we are aware that there is a performer who was *somewhere* making a performance to a camera. There may or may not have been anyone else in the space with Acconci. The artist focuses

his gaze on the camera and in turn can be seen to be looking at us, the viewer, and, in what can be seen as an attempt to make us aware of our voyeurism, he points at us accusatorily. He doesn't know who or where we are, and we know that this is a recorded event and not a live performance, still we are all implicated in a process together but whose time, place and discernible protagonists are in a process of dislocation and deferral. From the perspective of my research I will position *Centres* as site-specific practice that articulates the very tension for/of site- specificity. *Centres* can be seen here as existing between video as artwork, performance, and documentation of performance. It is singularly none of these things, but at the same time all of them. In a Supermodern technological age we have access to a range of technologies and archives that allows the events of being together to be continually reworked and reinterpreted, and it is here that I point to the potentials of Augé's Supermodernity rather than mourn its advent. Here the technological interlinking of material and documentation gives rise to questions around the proximity of the viewer to the event being witnessed. There is a simultaneity to the relationship between Acconci's act of pointing and my reception of his gesture that connects us in time and space.

I am writing about *Centres* here as a result of watching a recording of Acconci talking about the piece, not after seeing the piece itself. The layers that exist in the example of Acconci speaking about his work at a lecture that is then broadcast and viewed on YouTube are several-fold: There is the initial live action of 'pointing' during the performance in the 1970s, there is the video documentation of the performance recorded at the time, there are the still photographic documents of the video, there are the still photographic documents of the performance, there is the lecture in the USA where Acconci gives another context to the piece, there is the video of this on YouTube, there is the transcription of the text spoken by the artist from the video on YouTube, and so on ad infinitum. This sense of reiteration sees potential in the imbrication of technological and oral historical dialogues, in an embrace of what Augé describes as an excessive need to give meaning to the present.

The position that I take here considers the potential of re-working and re-iterating material of initial events in a multitude of places for a multitude of audiences, where fixed meanings attributable to one's experience of initial events are destabilised and a challenge to substantive notions of site occurs. As a consequence of an overload of attributable meanings, site stability or indeed specificity is precarious. In Augé's Supermodernist terms, an excess of information available through critical discourse surrounding an art event, or any event for

that matter, makes it susceptible to the clutches of the non-place, the work becomes a process of phenomena realised, but never fully, in transit.

Augé writes,

What is new is not that the world lacks meaning, or has little meaning, or less than it used to have; it is that we seem to feel an explicit and intense daily need to give it meaning: to give meaning to the world, not just some village or lineage. This need to give a meaning to the present, if not the past, is the price we pay for the overabundance of events corresponding to a situation we could call 'supermodern' to express its essential quality: excess (1995: 109).

In conclusion, *Performing Criticism* sees audience criticism become a script that once performed emphasises an interactivity where authors cannot be certain and whose places of articulation are equally as unstable. The video projection of *Redefining a Sense of Place* projected over my shoulder, as well as the empty chair next to me play on ideas of absence and presence, and the re-iterative layering of times, places and multiple authors destabilises the specificity of the site and text. The piece gives material form to the relationships that Massey writes may never be established (non-meetings up), but are, however, part of a shared space nonetheless. A movement between certainty and uncertainty here reveals the potentials of the psychological drift as a way to encounter Augé's critique of the abundance of meaning as conducive to a reduced consciousness of place. Multiple voices and authors are composed to speak to how an authorial uncertainty is experienced in social interactivity, playing on the idea that as social selves we vaguely know the script and the tacit agreements which dictate social etiquettes but often struggle to orient ourselves in social space. *Performing Criticism* saw performance mechanics developed that are analogous to the adjustments one makes to one's social trajectory in the collaborative production of social space as one navigates the social script and abundance of possible meanings in any given social situation.

Rather than accept Augé's resignation that the overabundance of meaning is a price we have to pay, *Performing Criticism* plays with how social space can embrace the multiple simultaneous meanings of numerous authorial voices, whilst asking questions of our past and imagining our futures. If one were to attempt to articulate past, present and future materials

of public social space simultaneously, what might this look like? This question led to the production of *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space: A Post-Substantive Approach to Place*.

2.4

Finding Forms in Dialogic Space



Figure 7. *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space*, (2011)

Dear Reader

At this point I invite you to access the document entitled *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space*.

Finding Forms in Dialogic Space was a performance comprising three screens/projections and a spoken narrative. The first projection showed a video montage containing extracts from each of the performances above, emphasizing the palimpsestic writing-over discussed above and the utilization of a subjective layering of social selves as understood in my reference to Braidotti. The second projection was a live-feed of the audience in the studio space in Northampton with the third screen a projection of a live Skype broadcast streamed from the café in Nottingham where the initial moment of eye-contact with the waitress was made. The convergence of these frames, performers and spectators sought to mobilise Massey's writing on spatial simultaneity discussed in Chapter 1. In addition to the projections there was a microphone that I used at intervals to combine my amplified voice with the acoustic voice, a method used in *Redefining a Sense of Place*.

The piece revisited the mode of the performance lecture, and with the various projections running, I proceeded to read a text that combined a theoretical and contextual overview of my research with sentences made from streams of consciousness. I employed an approach to the reading of this text that switched between a prosaic academic mode of delivery, and a more performative style that relied on improvisation, poetics and deliberate awkwardness. Social awkwardness was a theme that had been touched on in previous performances and the mechanics of this piece sought to explore this further. In courting a social awkwardness, I purposefully and deliberately employed strategies that tempted failure, which in turn would allow me to manipulate and manage this failure. Conceptually, my reasoning here resonates with my reading of sociologist Erving Goffman which I will discuss below, but firstly I will describe where failure occurred and how I both managed and manipulated its occurrence.

During my reading, the Skype broadcast lost its connection several times, causing the flow of the text to be interrupted during my efforts to re-establish the connection. This element added a dynamic of uncertainty and precariousness that made things awkward for both me and my audience. The piece relied on each of its composite elements working together to ensure its correct function, however, my research deliberately seeks to present the connections between people and places as interconnected, but whose interconnection is uncertain and susceptible to flux and in this and other cases failure, that is to say failure defined as that which represents a break down in the orders of things which reveals the precariousness of a given situation. By using technologies and methods that tempt failure, there exists the potential for stability of connection between the elements of the situation to breakdown. It is the participatory potential that results from social situational breakdown that this performance sought to explore.

As the internet was lost, it became about the ability of Richard Wain, my co-performer based in the café, to solve the problem and reconnect one place with another. The connection was re-established but was lost again moments later. On this occasion, an audience member moved from her seated position among the rest of the audience to answer the Skype call, taking it upon herself to attempt to fix the situation by intervening to reconnect. A participatory dynamic evolved where the audience and I were united in attempts to establish stability and seamless connectivity between people and places, stability which can be seen to be an attempt to address the failure as perceived by the audience member. At the point of

intervention, the audience member's role becomes that of audience-participant as she intervenes and shifts the dynamic of the piece.

The audience had no knowledge of what they were to encounter in the piece before they entered the space, but after a period of being together, tacit agreements were made and people began to take care of the situation efforts to support me. The piece made implicit the idea that these connective technologies were employed to bring several people together across a series of locations simultaneously, and that the perceived wholeness of the artwork relied on all the places being connected at the same time. The failing technologies and my disruptive, clumsy and at times purposefully awkward articulation of complex theoretical material created a situation where my audience felt the need to 'take care' of me. I was the host, but my hospitality was failing, so I needed support.

Ideas around caretaking and hospitality will continue to be explored as Chapter 3 draws to its conclusion and the performances *Host and Host(s)* are discussed, but at this point I would like to bring Goffman into the discussion to support an understanding of the implicit teamwork associated with participation in the context of the audience member's intervention. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) Goffman frames everyday social encounters and interactions as dramatic structures that see roles assumed and played out by individuals in group situations. The 'team', as Goffman posits, 'may be defined as a set of individuals whose intimate cooperation is required if a given projected definition of the situation is to be maintained' (1959: 108), and as a situation *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* broke down before the eyes of the audience, ceasing its maintenance. At this point there was cooperation which demonstrated care on the part of those who intervene.

As each disconnection occurred, different audience members got up to reconnect the Skype call. The intention of the piece was to create a sense of togetherness across spaces and times, both here and now/then and there. It asked what a rethinking of what being together as a public might mean, and how a fractured sense of social togetherness produced by performance might reveal potentials of our social interrelationality. People were assembled in a situation that Massey might describe as one of 'thrown togetherness', and in throwing together people across the various places within this performance, a sense of shared responsibility was experienced. Upon being faced with a situation that made visible what Massey might describe as an 'ever-shifting constellation of trajectories' (Massey, 2005: 151),

the chance to re-imagine the responsibility of the togetherness of social space became possible. This responsibility can be seen as a social interrelationality based on the necessity to maintain an order and support one another.

In thinking about the idea of maintaining order and stability through gestures of social interrelationality in performance through acts of supporting one another, I would like to bring the discussion back to ideas around thought acts. I would position as thought acts the interventions on the parts of the audience members who broke through the theatrical fourth wall to save the performance from failing. In discussions on intersubjectivity and affective exchange Whalley and Miller draw together Austin and Goffman in an exploration of where performativity and performance differ, and it is in through this reading that I would like to explore the methodological and ethical problems in making performances that tempt failure and which encourage the audience to take care of a situation that had purposefully been designed with failure a distinct possibility. As Whalley and Miller write, '[c]ulturally, 'performance' has become synonymous with pretence', noting how Goffman 'writes convincingly about the 'performer' doing one thing yet believing another' (Whalley and Miller, 2017: 136). They note how, in performance, there is a sense of what they describe as 'feigning', whereas in the Austinian sense the performative shift actually *does* something, as if to imply a real shift in things as opposed to a feigned shift. The poststructuralist problematics of this real/feigned binary are not lost on Whalley and Miller who discuss Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida's conceptualising of performativity, which, in opposition to Austin's performatives which 'do' something, 'calls into question the sincerity of the performative' (Whalley and Miller, 2016: 137).

It is the problem of knowing when to act and when not to that my thought act concept is concerned with and which *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* seeks to play with. The methods employed in the making of *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* encourage an unstable reading of when things are going right and when they are going wrong. These discussions around performativity and where the real/imaginary binary is problematised lend a welcome instability to the actions that the thought acts I identify lead to, and it is the instability of knowing 'where we stand' when in social space with one another that my work seeks to exploit. The audience members who came to my rescue felt compelled to do so; they perhaps 'thought they were doing the right thing'? The line between thinking and doing is purposefully blurred in this work, and although there are ethical issues in making work that

feigns failure and ‘cries wolf’ in an effort to get attention, it is the exploration of the dynamics of interrelationality between social subjects in a space that this research plays with.

My audience were brought together through the making of the performance and were framed alongside another public by virtue of the live projection of the café space and the live projection of themselves in the performance space. This mirroring of their presence in the space not only gave them a direct visualisation of their presence in the space - what I argue is their performance, it also allowed them to see those who by chance they were seated next to. Indeed, as Massey writes ‘the chance of space may set us down next to the unexpected neighbour. The multiplicity and the chance of space here in the constitution of place provide (an element of) that inevitable contingency which underlies the necessity for the institution of the social’ (Massey, 2005: 151). As a group we were placed in a situation together as subjects in space, the live video feed of the audience being a deliberate attempt to encourage the audience to see themselves as elements within the piece – or subjects, rather than merely onlookers or passive others. Through this inclusion a togetherness occurred where we assumed responsibility for one another, taking care of the situation as a team when it became precarious. The composition of these conceptual concerns as realized in performance is evidence of my thoroughgoing response to my research aims made manifest in practice.

There is trust implicit in the idea of a team who take care of one another, and in order to acknowledge levels of trust, I would like to return to the narrative I read to my audience. The reading of this narrative in performance speaks to my positioning of an ethics of working with audience-participants which I discussed in the introduction. Whilst I am using a narrative that is constructed from fieldwork conversations, I purposefully anonymize contributors and interweave the moments in the conversation in such a way that it becomes unclear to my audience whose stories belong to who. The narrative is reconstructed in a way that once read out loud speaks to a confessional autobiographical language. My method of delivery is that of someone sharing their private thoughts with a public of strangers. Echoing previous performances, I read a narrative in accompaniment to my pre-recorded self that involved investing my trust in my audience. My reading discussed the people in the café, the people in the audience, and people that had been in previous audiences before but who were not there on the day. Through this textual layering of thoughts and experiences of others, I endeavored to connect multiple publics whilst sharing what was personal and private to me. I moved around the space, at times engaging with audience members in close proximity. At

one point in the performance I sat on the floor placing myself in the frame with my audience, our image projected onto the wall in front of us. The clattering voices of the people in the café being broadcast into the space combined with my voice as I read my text to the audience, confessing my inner thoughts to them. This confession, and the language of confession generally speaks once more to ideas around failure, with the confession signifying my self-perceived human failings and a need to unburden myself of the weight of these failings. Some thoughts were about them, some about people I had experienced, others about audience members that had been there before with me but who were absent now. I have included the text here to include you also.

The text read,

I need to talk to you.

I didn't know it would lead to this.

I know your name but won't write it down.

I told everyone in Wales about it.

I probably just want to know it's OK.

You certainly lowered the tone.

I should have stayed but I was afraid people might speak to me.

I feel bad not telling you the whole truth.

There is rigour and there is aggression.

I wonder if you even like art or did we just get off on the wrong foot?

I wonder if I would still have used your voice if you weren't so beautiful.

I want to impress you...And you.

I am not hung up on class, not now that I am local.

There are no demarcating borders between this room, that café and our village.

I haven't rehearsed in the traditional sense, I just haven't fucking slept properly for weeks.

*I hope you're not here today, because I see you as a threat, even though I enjoyed our walk
along the cliffs and like the tone of your voice and your grey jacket.*

If you are here I won't read this.

It's only through going through the practice of going through this that I can know any of this.

Why would I tell them about hiding my pants?

Did I really expect them to tell me the last time they hid theirs?

*I appreciate you telling me about the toilet on the fourth floor of the UCL and the pipework
that hid shit soaked pants.*

At least I know this connects us.

Why would I tell them that semen sticks to the floor of the bath if you choose to wank there?

Why would I tell them about the Chinese girls at the Moat House?

If it wasn't for that moment in that café, none of this would need to be known.

It's like a bottle of piss on the hard shoulder of the motorway.

*Will you ever come back, and if I see you will I be able to tell about your contribution to
performance research?*

A nervous breakdown and discussions of separation there.

A nervous breakdown and discussions of separation here.

I am not Zorro or Bobby Davro.

I am jealous.

I do need you all here with me today.

Even you.

There is more to it than just Panini's and coffee.

At the point where I sat with audience and read the above text, I felt I had been together with them physically in the space long enough for me to confess my feelings. The efforts of the audience members who intervened when the technology stopped working indicated they felt they had been with me long enough to take care of my performance when it seemed like it was going wrong. I speak here of closeness, but this is a problematic term. An audience member commented that she felt closer to me when I sat on the floor with the audience and read to them. I felt close to the people I was reading about, even though some of them weren't there. Another audience member spoke to me after the performance and expressed their need to know who I had walked along the cliffs with and whose voice I had enjoyed the tone of. These confessions had brought people into contact with people who they may or may not have known, but, in order to bring some closure to their attempts to follow my narrative, they had to imagine who these people might be and where the locations might be in which these narratives took place.

As my audience and I moved back and forth between who and what we could see and hear, and who/what we had to imagine, leaps of faith occurred where my audience were required to piece together the abundance of information I presented them with. There are to challenges to Augé's conceptualisation of non-place here that echo Whalley and Miller's *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* (2002), where the potential for blurring real and imaginary narratives, and the potentials of layering place and experience can be seen. By 'disrupting the experiencing of space', *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* was Miller and Whalley's attempt to 'provide a counter to the behaviours of the non-place (those of transit and transaction)' (Whalley and Miller, 2010: 225). In the piece the couple renewed their wedding vows in a motorway service station that had particular significance to their relationship, publicly celebrating their bond in a place of transit.

In Whalley and Miller's challenge to Augé's Supermodernity, a space is opened where social realities and performativity blur. By their own admission there were members of the audience that in the beginning viewed the piece as a 'wacky art project', but whom were 'seen wiping tears from their eyes' during the wedding vows (2010: 228). The audience member began with the knowledge of the spectacular theatricality of the event, but in knowing that Miller and Whalley are *actually* a couple, the theatricality buckled under the weight of a sense of reality. It is here where one's relationship to what one knows about a place and the action occurring within it is challenged. The piece forces the viewer to

confront the function of place and how one identifies with it. If, as Augé argues, a place is ‘defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity’ (1995: 77), then a non-place, by definition, cannot be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity. Both *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* and *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* demonstrate how place cannot be measured or ever fully defined when social identity is susceptible to the blurring of reality and the imaginary. *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* questions whether Whalley and Miller were demonstrating their true love for one another, or simply performing a simulacrum of their love. Like *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain*, *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* plays place and non-place off against each other through the composition of a situation where nobody really knows their place and where performances fluctuate between the real and the imaginary as roles, responsibilities and expectations blur in states of transit.

Finding Forms in Dialogic Space makes a case for an optimistic re-conceptualisation of place and the production of social space that is receptive to the myriad of coalescing stories and experiences that blur notions of truth. Place, as seen in Massey, and as intimated as possible in Augé, is a repository of the specifics of past and present and the layers of history that we carry within our archival bodies and minds. It is where a synthesis of the social specifics of others disrupts a substantive reading of location; the significance of place becomes reliant on a process of there and then/here and now. This concept can be understood through Massey who uses the term ‘the event of place’ (Massey, 2005: 138) to position a re-conceptualisation of place that frees it conceptually from its rigid geographical position as maker of identities determined by a geographic location with fixed histories and social norms. The notion of site- specificity is problematic if place is understood to be continually moving and identifiable in the emergent forces of the present rather than fixed histories of the past.

Site-specific art, arguably, has often historically served to represent something of a place through an engagement with its local community and history. Kester, however, acknowledges the danger of trying to represent a definitive embodiment of community or place, using Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) writing on delegation to comment how socially engaged projects often result in subjective representations of the artist rather than the community. This brings the discussion back to ideas of participation and who is active in the making of place and the production of social space. The dynamics of participation that my research explores provokes the idea that social space is a site-specific process that contains a network of participants whose activity or passivity is never fully clear. It is a participative

structure where those who never knew they contributed in the first place can be seen to be part of the process of becoming. This is what Massey might call the phenomena of the ‘non-meetings up’ (2005: 130).

Massey talks about how the discussion of being in a place often casually sees the name of a place used to articulate a perceived reality of being there ‘in’ that place, as though that place is fixed, substantive and immovably grounded. Arguing against the fixity of place is to suggest that a place exists in and of the ebbs and flows of the people who enter in and out of its agreed geographical borders, the people located far away who dream of being there, and through the distorted accounts of histories who have written about its past and so on. Rather than place being a location, it is, rather, something that *takes* place rather than *is* place - or, as Massey might say, ‘an event’, in which a series of ‘histories/trajectories’ participate in the ‘co-formation’ of place (Massey, 2005: 138). To bring our attention back to *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* I would like to think further about what it is to be thrown-together. It is through throwing myself together with people and reliving, re-imagining and retelling my experiences where it becomes possible to know more about what it is to become social with others. The place of our thrown-togetherness can be understood as moving and evolving. This sits within what I refer to as post-substantivity.

The term post-substantivity suggests a period in site-specific performance discourse where site is no longer defined by a location or geographical co-ordinate. If we understand an art object or event to be given meaning by its relationship between the viewer and the place of viewing, and this meaning being original or proper, once any part of the system is changed then this particular signifying system breaks down and the work becomes something else. This instability makes a reading of substantive site-specificity precarious due to the viewer bringing her own histories to the work, therefore disrupting a fixed specificity. This reading of site- specificity begins with 1960s minimalist sculpture. In minimalist sculpture the relationship between the viewer, the object and the gallery forces the viewer to locate the work in the space it resides, becoming implicated in the system of specificity in the act of placing the object in the space. Kaye observes a difference between an autonomous artwork where the artist places the viewer outside the work, and the minimalist sculptures where, quoting critic Michael Fried ‘the experience’, ‘by definition’, ‘includes the beholder’ (Fried, 1968, cited in Kaye, 2000: 3). This theatricality of viewing an object in a space is where Fried sees the visual arts enter theatre, and where the signifying systems which give meaning

to place are located or performed by the viewer. Parallels can be drawn between Kaye's writing on site-specificity where a constant deferral of meaning occurs through the relationship between form, location and viewer, and Massey's writing on place. A place, it can be argued, can never retain a proper location due to the movement of the people in and through it; it is this movement and disruption that my work embraces.

In conclusion, *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* developed modes of performance failure and technological interruption to unite audience and artist in a dialogic situation, where confessional histories and live and pre-recorded presences of bodies in space coalesce in what Massey might describe a situation of throwntogetherness. The piece explores proximity in ways that built on the previous performances, with a closer interactivity revealed that allowed for questions around proximity to be tested and pave the way for further testing in Chapter 3. A combination of text, live projection and multiple voices created a situation where the audience and I worked together to establish psychological connections with both the people recounted in my narrative, but also those streamed virtually through Skype. Live and mediated bodies interact in a process of togetherness, that once disrupted through technological failure leads to a process of audience interaction that I position here as caretaking. This continues my challenge to Augé's conceptions of non-place through a consciousness of place born of the coalescence of technologies, texts and bodies – bodies both in a live performance space and a mediated space elsewhere. This work plays creatively with layers of movement and transit, using mechanics that encourage a physical interaction with an audience and invite journeys into mental imaginations. Place and non-place, activity and inactivity, silence and conversation become terminologically unstable as people are thrown together. Some are aware of their participation, others are not, but we move together all the same. Levels of conscious movement through thought, space and technological connectivity realised in *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* are explored further below in *Walking Through the Field*.

2.5

Walking Through the Field



Figure 8. *Walking Through the Field*, (2011)

Dear Reader

At this point I invite you to access the documentation entitled *Walking Through the Field*. This video is a collage of material from both a performance lecture and a performance to camera, alongside still images created from downloaded GPS data.

Walking Through the Field was a 2011 collaboration with a group of artists led by Daniel Belasco Rogers at the Yorkshire sculpture park, UK (YSP), and was part of a Live Art Development Agency (LADA) DIY project. The LADA DIY projects are commissioned initiatives where a lead-artist guides other artists through specific theme or site-led experiences. This project explored the use of GPS tracking technologies in site-specific performance. My interest in applying to work with Rogers was to research how the layering of the material of speaking, walking and sharing personal histories with one another might be explored in performance to reimagine and articulate social space. The mechanics employed in this process sought to both explore being together *during* the intended GPS walks, but also in the weeks leading up to the walks, and the effects of the walks on our relationships *after* the walks. I was concerned not with positioning the Yorkshire Sculpture Park as the site of

the work, rather I sought to defer a stable location for the work whilst still identifying places in between. This intention speaks to Chapter 2's main sub-question, which, as previously stated is: how, through positioning site as a process rather than fixed location, can the material of place, space and human experience become imbricated to produce new insights into interrelationality?

The process through by which this questioning began started with an exploration of the exchange of personal geographical histories. My aim was to explore how people who have never met before negotiate the unfamiliar social space they find themselves in and how common ground is sought and found. Sociologist Fran Tonkiss describes the physical negotiation of common spaces between strangers in urban areas as the 'improvised ballet of the streets' (Tonkiss, 2005: 22), and I sought to build on this thinking by moving geographically through conversations to locate common ground. Moving geographically through conversations can be understood here as an act of place naming, an act that I argue below becomes a still dance between places in our memories. The conscious attention to one's movement between thoughts and the subsequent documentation and dissemination of this movement and these thoughts can be seen throughout the research so far, and in my exchange with Rogers I developed these mechanics further.

Before meeting Rogers I had begun to think about the places I knew we had in common, and in conversation with him I metaphorically jumped between places in an attempt to find common ground, and when we met in person I moved from this inner dialogue and began looking for common ground in *actual* conversation with him. On the day of the collaboration in the first moments of meeting we discussed the places that we knew, with a mental map beginning to be created that can be thought of as a conceptual cartographic representation of our shared geographic history. Massey comments that 'maps are representations, and obviously, and inevitably too, they are selective (as is any form of representation)' (2005: 106), and Rogers' map and mine were no different. Rogers and I began a process of mapping that recalled times and places whose selection was determined by common place, and by common place I mean both the 'here and now' physical place of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, but also the 'then and there' of the places we revisited in conversation. The duality of being here and there in the exploration of common ground illustrates a sense of the complexities of our spatial relationships. Our words traced a map that we followed through

the recalling of histories, drawing moments and places together in a ‘ballet’ of place-name exchange.

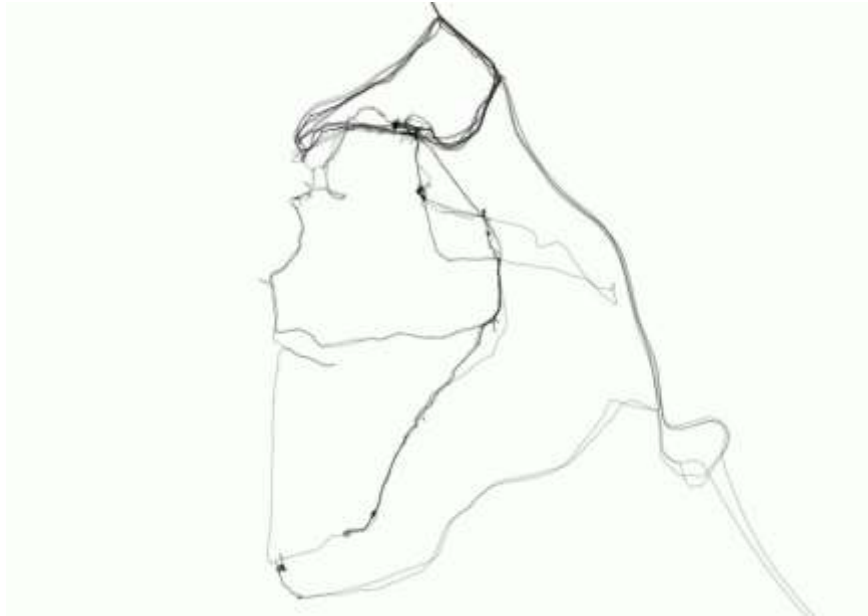


Figure 9. *Walking Through the Field*, (2011)

One of the objectives of the workshop was to make a GPS drawing of the walks we would do together, but before a map of a walk had been physically generated, a drawing of sorts had been produced that linked the first few members of the group. Rogers and I had drawn places like Berlin and Nottingham together with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, becoming social through conversation in the exchange of shared geographic histories. A performing of social familiarity had begun, and, certainly to my experience, so too had a sense of social belonging. By the time the next participant arrived I felt local to the place I was in and performed an identity that postured this belonging. I became conscious of how I was holding my body with confidence and presenting myself as someone who felt powerfully located in this place. The establishment of geographical commonality had produced social familiarity.

The next participant arrived and the same social dance through places and histories to find common ground began. The second participant and I were both connected to Northampton in some way, and, just like before with Rogers, the mention of someone/somewhere brought us together in both the place that we were in (YSP), and crucially the place where we had found common ground (Northampton). Our spatial layering evoked a sense of being here and there simultaneously. We were both ‘here’ at the YSP and at the same time ‘there’ in

Northampton. These places become co-ordinates on an imaginary evolving map, and can be seen to be plotted in an attempt to stake a claim on the foreign territory one finds oneself in with another.

Massey comments that a map operates as a ‘technology of power’ (Massey, 2005: 106) and in my attempts to locate myself within the space, I began linking co-ordinates in a performative power-play between me and those who were here with me. Using the idea of a technology of power in this context serves to support the idea of a conversational mapping process as a way to foster common ground through the experience of place. The word *technology* derives from the words ‘*techne*’ which means ‘art, skill, craft, or the way, manner, or means by which a thing is gained’, and ‘*Logos*’ which means the ‘utterance by which inward thought is expressed’ (Web.engr.oregonstate.edu, 2016). Understood in these terms, the art of conversation can be seen a mechanic of gaining a sure-footing in a foreign space. This attempt at sure-footing continued as the other participants arrived, with Rogers immediately asking us all to say who we were and where we were from. Initial links between individuals and places were made, with more extensive geographical links established the more we got to know each other. The initial statement of where we are from can be understood as that the declaration that creates the foundation for who we are and who we are to perform as. It is a representation of both place and self, performed through the utterance of one’s own name in the same sentence as the place one is from.

The naming of places, like the naming of streets, can be argued as an attempt to fix a location and understand its history. It is evidence of a desire to pin down a place and load it with history and authenticity in an attempt at steadying the disorientation of the space it produces. Like the moment we step off a bus in the city and begin to ‘take each other on in an unyielding flow and contraflow’ (Tonkiss, 2005: 22) in movements that literal knock us off our paths, the disorientation of a foreign moment in a foreign place dislocates our senses of social stability. It is the convergence of physically walking through space and the conversational movement between places that this part of the research sought to explore as a mechanic of site-specific imbrication. Recognition of places we know through the act of naming provides an antidote to the senses of social disorientation described above. Indeed, de Certeau describes how ‘the city keeps us under its gaze, which one cannot bear without feeling dizzy’, but ‘proper names carve out pockets of hidden and familiar meanings’ (de Certeau, 1984: 104). It is this named familiarity that is a necessary part of our script when performing the act of becoming social.

Once we had named our places and found common ground, it became time to walk together and explore how the senses of imbricated place that I have describing might reveal further layers. Some members of the group went off to walk together but I decided to go alone. As I walked I felt aware of the other members of the group, with traces of them existent in my thoughts as I made my lines on the ground. My GPS device displayed a small image of the drawing that I was producing in the live moment as I produced it. This image was physical evidence of my presence in that place made possible by satellite technologies in other places. I was conscious that my movement was being traced multi-locationally, and in thinking about the others in the group and their movements, I became more conscious of mine. Each time I felt located in the place I was walking my location was displaced by the presence of the other people in the places other than mine. The place I *was* in was made specific by the ghost of the places I *was not*.

After several hours of walking we reconvened and made plans to go out for the evening. We ate and drank together and talked more about our lives. Some spoke on mobile phones to their families whilst others updated mood monitoring applications on their smart phones. We all moved constantly between our material bodies situated in Yorkshire and our virtual presence elsewhere. Although located in a particular geographical place, we were also in psychological states of transit as we updated our social status on digital platforms with physically distant others. Eventually we left and headed for our hotel, checked into our respective rooms and slept. I thought about the other members of the group and I imagined they thought about me.

The next day our GPS drawings were downloaded to become documents of our time walking together whilst apart. My notes written in reflective analysis of our social interrelationality, performative posturing and creative cartography figured alongside the other material I would leave the experience with, and, in order to develop my findings both with an audience and alone, I produced the works seen in the video documentation you viewed at the beginning of this part of the thesis.

To reiterate, the video can be understood as being composed in several parts:

1. The downloaded GPS imagery from the walks
2. The manipulated versions that show only the lines of the walks
3. A video of these lines being projected onto my body during a performance to camera

4. Footage of a performance lecture where I shared the experience of the walks with a live audience. The footage from Stage 3 was projected onto the wall of the space in which I performed, with my live body seen moving in and out of my mediated body's representation.

The images in part 1 detail the raw data from the walks, this raw data being the digital traces of our movement together. The lines we made are representations of the histories of physically walking together, but are also archives of walks created after the place naming ritual discussed above. In seeing them in this way I encourage you dear reader to see the places that they hold within them. They are at one and the same time Nottingham, Berlin, New York, Northampton, the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and so on. In projecting these images onto my body, an action that sees my body embody the lines in an attempt to physically move once more with those I walked with occurs. Once projected into a space in front of an audience as the image was in the performance lecture, there becomes a series of layers that work together to communicate a site-specific process of being together. The site of the YSP is imbricated with the site of the satellites that tracked us; the site of my body is used as a place to receive the images; the site of the performance lecture (University of Northampton) is the site where these elements come together; and the place of the digital documentation within the thesis becomes another place within this process. The performance lecture sees me walk around the space, moving my live body within my projected body to overlay simultaneous selves, brought together through this movement and my oral recollection of the places and times I imagine out loud. As with *Creating Forms in Dialogic Space*, I bring the conversations I had with others to an audience, uniting people and places, times and experiences in an attempt to communicate the process of becoming social. The text that I read aloud speaks once again to the imaginary and the real, playing one another off in a performance of fact and fantasy.

In Conclusion, *Walking Through the Field* placed the audience back in the role of passive receivers of a layering of social experience. The piece developed further the mechanics of drifting and wandering, with my live body overlapping my mediated body in a performance lecture that once again collaged moments from fieldwork and previous performances. *Walking Through the Field* saw an emphasis on movement, with the live and projected body playing out their movements in an act of understanding physical and psychological positions amongst others in the world. Economies of scale were revealed through the projection of

video documentation that merges the body from a previous performance with the body in the space as it moved around in front of the live audience. This piece made deliberate attempts to destabilise senses of place and any fixed notion of a location for the experiences being spoken about, playing on truth and the authenticity of one's experience with others in social space.

What is presented in the performances I have produced and written about so far is a practice that physically and technologically layer's places, times and experiences in a site-specific process, where our social interrelationality is examined through performance. Place was positioned from the beginning of Chapter's 1 and 2 as being unstable and ever shifting, with material from conversations, observations, and embodied experiences across places and times composed to articulate an interrelationality that allows place and social space to be imagined in new ways. Face to face contact and anonymous fleeting glimpses intertwine in a process of becoming social where the layers of fact, fiction, fantasy and reality converge as an interconnected process that attend to my provocations of Kester's face to face dialogic essentialism and the proposal by Augé for an ethnology of solitude. Massey ideas of togetherness and space as a collection of stories so far are played out in practice as these concepts and critical positions converge to explore ways performance can position mechanics for becoming social. Chapter 3 continues to explore social fantasy and reality, how personal histories are exchanged, and how being with social others contains moments whose protagonists and active participants are unclear. Further to this, Chapter 3 asks what more we might understand about proximity and intimacy in social space when we exchange personal histories on physical personal levels that see thresholds crossed.

Chapter 3

Introduction

A sensible point of departure for Chapter 3 is the reintroduction of Kester's discussions around face-to-face contact in the context of relational practices to further consider the ethics of working with participants and what 'working with' might mean. In discussions around the ethics of dialogic encounters, Kester uses Jeffrey T. Nealon's *Alterity Politics: Ethics and Performative Subjectivity* (1998) to provide a focus on models of 'dialogical' experience and 'responsibility', as situated by Mikhail Bakhtin's and Emmanuel Levinas respectively (Nealon, 1998, cited in Kester, 2004: 118). Through these thinkers and their texts Kester begins to position the physical encountering of others as generative of an ontology that is central to art created dialogically, describing intersubjective ethics in term of the concrete reality of the other experienced through a face-to-face encounter. 'This "corporeal" interaction', says Kester, is central to a dialogical aesthetic' (Kester, 2004: 119). The idea of the observer being part of a social dialogic structure has been explored in Chapter 2, but Chapter 3 takes the provocation of Kester's claim for face-to-face encounters as being central to relational and dialogic practices further, exploring voyeuristic modes to begin with as an exploration of the dynamics of interrelational distance and awareness, before proceeding to reduce the distance between artist and participant to its closest proximity as the Chapter concludes.

The reintroduction of Calle and Acconci is useful here as Bourriaud himself includes Calle in his *Relational Aesthetics* (2002), pointing to how 'she follows a passer-by' in *Suite Vénitienne* (1980), this observation implicitly qualifying voyeuristic methods as relational (Bourriaud, 1998, cited in Bishop, 2006: 162). In *Suite Vénitienne* Calle followed strangers to orient herself in situation and places that felt foreign to her, a method I will explore further below. Before discussing Calle I would like to move further back in tracing methods of relational orientation by focussing on Acconci's voyeuristic performance methods which preceded Calle's by some 11 years. During a lecture at the University of Southern California in 2010, Acconci commented on his *Following pieces* of 1969, foregrounding a line of questioning for the work that asked 'now that I am in real space, what gives me a reason to move there'? (Acconci, 2016). In *Following Pieces* Acconci would follow people at random

through public spaces until they entered a private space like a house or office, with the pieces lasted anything between a few minutes and several hours. In applying a language to the work Acconci asks how:

I – a person, an agent attends to it, a world considered as if it's out there. How do I find some way to tie myself into that world, key myself into that world'? (Acconci, 2016).

What is key here is Acconci's questioning of his 'reason to move here' and 'tie' or 'key' himself into the world. This positioning of observational practices as ways to locate oneself in the world with others is where the research in this chapter begins. This returns us to the idea that anonymity can be understood as social and relational, with face-to-face encounters not categorically defining interrelationality and where ethnological practices of solitude (moving on from Augé) are seen as methods of orienting oneself in social space. This provocation is further supported by Tonkiss's proposition that '(s)olitude should be understood as a social relation and a 'way of being with others' (Tonkiss, 2005: 22). The practical performances presented in Chapter 3 differ from those in Chapter 2 due to Chapter 3's aim of reducing proximity and finding intimacy. Indeed, the thesis' second sub-question 'what does this imbrication (the relational material of place, space and human experience) reveal about the potentials of intimacy and proximity in the context of site-specific performance and social space' demands a focus on practices that speak to intimacy and proximity. *Falling in Love Again – and Again* leads us into Chapter 3 with explorations of love. In *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* I questioned whether my moment of eye contact with a stranger signified a moment of falling in love, and it was this and the other performative thoughts I discuss that combined to activate enquiries into orientation of one's self with others through intimate thoughts and intimate confessions. Love, as seen in Chapter 3, becomes the shortest shortcuts to intimacy; an mechanic of intimate sociality.

3.1

Falling in Love Again – and Again



Figure 10. *Falling in Love Again – and Again*, (2013)

Dear Reader

At this point you are invited to access the documentation entitled *Falling in Love Again – and Again*. The video is footage of a walk around Wolverhampton City Center, with a voiceover edited alongside the slowed down moving image. The voice is mine, but the words are those of others given to me in response to the task I gave them.

Falling in Love Again – and Again, was a performance created as part of the Interactivity/Interpassivity conference at the University of Wolverhampton. The piece was produced with the intention of exploring how intimacy can be manufactured in relation to people who will never know that they are the objects of our desire, but who will assist in our social orientation just the same. With this in mind I led a group of participants into the city of Wolverhampton.

I began by giving my participants some brief directives: they were to follow me to the center of the city and, once we arrived there, they were to find someone to fall in love with. I told them that they had between five and ten minutes to complete this task, but before reconvening, they were instructed to text message the details of their exchanges with

strangers to my mobile phone. They were also asked not to let their chosen subject know that they had fallen in love with them. Before leading my participants out into the city, and to give some context to the experiment, I established a provocation that suggested that the anonymous subjects that Calle and Acconci followed around the city streets were active in a process of becoming social that implicated both the follower and the followed – a provocation discussed above in relation to Kester. These subjects, I argued, provided us with another person with which to locate ourselves, or as Acconci puts it, ‘become dependent on (and) ‘need’ (Acconci, 2006: 77).

The idea of locating oneself with another speaks to a language of interrelationality where actions of orientation can reveal desires and intimacies. This need or desire to locate oneself through someone else is seen in Calle in how she describes being ‘swept along by the energy of other people, getting them to choose (her) itineraries for her’ (Calle, 2003: 77). Methods of ‘writing-over’ discussed above in relation to Forced Entertainment’s *Nights in this City* can be seen in Acconci’s *Following pieces* and Sophie Calle’s *Suite Vénitienne*, with these works playing with real and imaginary relationships between people and place, something *Falling in Love Again – and Again* sought to explore.

Where Forced Entertainment overlaid imaginary events on actual locations, Calle, Acconci and my participants in *Falling in Love Again – and Again* overlaid imaginary relations over actual other people. I am not proposing here that the fantasies that lead to stalking are to be considered as formal performance elements, I do propose however, that there is potential to explore the mechanics of the social relations in the space between the imaginary and real through. Through the embrace of this imaginary space there is, I argue, a potential to see our relationships in social space as more intimately connected than once thought. This picks up on what I began to explore in Chapters 1 and 2 with regards to Massey’s ideas around the unsaid and Perec’s employment of the poetics of observation.

If one is to consider the imaginary texts that Forced Entertainment write-over place as a collection of fragmented real narratives spliced together and articulated as fact, albeit theatrically, then the real/imaginary dichotomy loses its polarity. The ways that one reads or produces meanings from the everyday events of place can, then, be said to be both/and narratives: both fiction and fact, imaginary and real, constructed through our creative abilities to negotiate relationships with one another - relationships which we create to locate intersubjectivities. In the same way Goffman likens social interactions to dramaturgical processes where one will perform in support of another so as not to deviate from the tacit

social script (or performance) that is agreed between socially coalescing subjects, I argue that the narratives we construct to fill in the blanks caused by never fully knowing each other are in themselves performances of becoming social. In these performances we make sense of everyday social interactions by inventing lines from scripts that were never written, and it is in the imagination where this invention takes place. Here truth is fabricated and intimate thoughts are revealed.

As my participants and I set out into the city to fall in love, a member of the audience asked me the question:

‘Are you from Wolverhampton?’

I told her I had grown up here (my first lie to her). I was at a disadvantage in terms of my knowledge of the place and this first lie was an initial attempt to forge familiarity by layering a fictional narrative over the place in order to locate myself with both her and the place itself. In disruption to the lie of me knowing the city, I asked various passersby where the center of town was. Both a hairdresser and a builder both directed me to small public square with a statue of a horse in it. When we arrived at the elected center I asked my participants where the cinema was. I then went on to tell them about one of my first loves who I remembered kissing in that cinema, and how it took me the best part of the film to pluck up the courage as I couldn’t find the right words or actions to initiate the kiss. This story was true, although the cinema wasn’t in Wolverhampton. The girl’s name was Janine. I then asked the question

‘Where is the shoe shop where I met my wife?’

They couldn’t tell me the answer to this question, but I recited the story of how we fell in love there just the same. I did indeed meet my wife in a shoe shop, but not in Wolverhampton. After the piece ended and everyone had texted the details of their experiences to my phone, my participants and I walked back to where we had begun our journey and reflected on the experience.

This research experiment sees the use of the mobile phone introduced to the research as a technology to support my performance mechanics. Here it becomes both a communication tool to mediate the experience, but also a depository for our shared fictional expressions of

love. The text messages that I collected on my phone became confessions of intimate but anonymous social relations. As a research agenda, it is perhaps an impossible task to prove love, but as a theme through which to create performance mechanics to research intimacy in social space, it has great potential. I cannot prove the being of love, but what I can do is gather research material that, when composed as layers of text, video and critical reflection, demonstrates a process of intimate becoming with others in social space that has love as its catalyst. As this chapter progresses, love is explored further as a shortcut to intimacy.

The text below is comprised of the messages I received from my participants. Below this are the reflections gathered after we had been into the city to fall in love with strangers. I have included these to give you some access to our collective attempts at falling.

The Texts

I have fallen in love in the haberdashery of Beatties. She wears a cap and is shopping for knitting needles.

We smile. Know.

Love is like the multi-coloured balls of wool.

She loves craft and cookery.

We will plan a winter holiday in Norway and we'll wear matching sweaters.

Rushed

In the shade, those lovely big ears, relaxed with beer and cigarettes.

Open and friendly face.

How I admire people that sit in cafes on their own.

Not waiting, just looking.

Drinking on their own without book, without computer, without newspaper,

Without phone.

You hold the pen to your mouth and carry the clipboard as though you are a schoolgirl on a trip to the museum.

You smile and seem happy and that makes me love you.

I imagine you find it easy to be friendly and you make eye-contact with me effortlessly.

I try not to look conspicuous but it's hard not to.

I'm stunned.

Just ran into a guy I had a crush on for 5 years, met him on the street!

A woman looking out the window almost wistfully.

We would talk, me having found an excuse to ask questions I didn't need the answer to. I might ask to meet her after work, to experience her in a less confined setting to see if that 'almost wistfulness' is part of her character or was merely a symptom of the place she must spend her time.

The Reflections

So, from the start I completely mistrusted everything you were saying, that it could somehow be pretend, but I was willing to enter into that.

I found it a very odd task I have to say, this performance art piece or whatever, and being part of the group and having participated in everything so far, I certainly didn't want to say I would rather not. So, I went along, but I'm not really looking for love at all at this time of my life, so to be fired out at my age and be told that you've five minutes to find someone to fall in love with, so far it's about five years and I'm still deliberating, so I found it all very strange.

But there was this bloke with a wee beany hat and a decent beard and a good substantial frame, and I thought sure you'll do. Then I looked and his trousers fell down and his builders bum..., and he had to pull them back up again, so it was a very strange experience in all for me, but I don't think I felt love in anyway during the proceedings.

But I did feel that I wasn't allowed to fall in love until you had given us the cue to go off and find that person, so there was this really weird element of being in the piece but being controlled in some way. But then once I was there and released to go and find my love it was really interesting. I had a quick succession of self-reflections and all sorts of criteria I would choose. And in the end I made a conscious decision to just respond to a feeling, because I think that's how love actually is.

I wasn't sure how much to move around, whether the act would entail walking around or whether to just sit somewhere and have a better sense of looking, without worrying about where I was walking. So, I tried them both out. It kind of gives you more space to think about what you are looking at (standing still), but it wasn't as successful as walking, or it didn't end up being. I think standing made me slightly more passive, like I was actively seeking, I think moving added to that process.

While trying to perform the role and considering what that entailed, and being very critical as I always am with most things, I ran into an acquaintance that I haven't seen for a very long time that I know from a different place and context. It was random and unusual to find them here in Wolverhampton, so it was nice to chat to him and have a conversation, and when we met we were both pretty stunned by the serendipity of our meeting so that kind of was a shock and that put me in an unexpected position, so I'm not really sure if I felt love but I definitely felt admiration and it was nice to see him.

So, I wasn't looking for a good-looking person, or a particular gender, it was just 'am I going to get a nice warm feeling from someone'. Surprisingly once I'd decided that that's what I was looking for it was very easy to eliminate those that weren't. There was a subject before the one I finally settled on and I looked very closely at the way he was looking at things and even though I felt this kind of warmth towards this other person, I just thought there was something not quite right about the way you are engaging with the world, and I not sure if I want to go anywhere near you. But the next person was ideal because she was engaging with the world in the way that I do, so that was the emergent criteria.

It's interesting because it sort of makes you question what love is. I have this theory that you can fall in love with anyone, so I'm looking for warmth, yes I'm not looking for anything really. I think you can produce that with anyone, like it's not a coincidence, sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't. It's like this idea that we have this one ideal individual, you know that's the only one, the one and only, and you fall in love and the moment you look into each other's eyes, I really don't believe in it. So, I guess I'm not very romantic in that way. But I was wondering when I found someone whether I was falling in love with them or just admiring them, so there was something about what they were doing, or how they were doing it that I would, or I could admire. So, it's more about actions than aura. But I think it's very personal as well.

I felt very much in the work from the moment we left this space.

I position the text messages as performance scripts which articulate the process of our social becoming, where the imagination is used to orient oneself with another more intimately than one might normally with a stranger. The scripts reveal the criteria that my participants used to determine who they chose to engage with, demonstrating some of what the act of self-orientation relies on. The texts I received became confessions of imaginings that allowed me to imagine those being imagined. Whilst watching the mobile phone footage I had taken during the experiment, and whilst listening to the recording of my participants' reflections, the anonymous characters being spoken about and watched became less foreign to me. The more I watched them, and the more I listened back to the recordings of my audience, the more their words and their experiences felt like mine. The method of voicing the experience of others is seen previously in *Performing Criticism*, and, similarly too, senses of absence and presence are evoked that raise questions around proximity. The confessions here were made from a distance, where anonymity between me, my participants and their objects of desire was maintained. The use of a communication technology to share intimacy anonymously continues to question the stability of what and where it is to be together.

In conclusion, the instability of authorship seen in the handing over of control to the participants in *Falling in Love – Again and Again* allowed the method of creating text from the experience of others echoed in earlier discussions seen in Kaye and Etchells to be explored. The act of sending strangers out into spaces to fall in love anonymously is developed as a performance mechanic in *Falling in Love – Again and Again*, with intimacy between individuals developing concepts around one-sided participation supported by Acconci and Calle, with Tonkiss's idea of solitude as a social relation supporting an interrelationality conducted anonymously. The missing information we may never know about one another being imagined in a creative act of social orientation is given weight by Goffman's writing on the dramaturgy of everyday life, with the effort to fill in the blanks in our imagining of others positioned as analogous to a creative act of social bonding. The creative act performed as we fill in the blanks places us in the position of the performer and/or the performed, depending on whether we are watching or being watched. Questions of public and private space and the activity of the participant arise here, questions whose answers I explore in the work below

3.2

Fluctuating Publics, Fluctuating Privates

As I begin to discuss the works below I would like to position myself as audience member who becomes performer and vice versa to demonstrate the fluctuating positioning of private and public space. With this in mind, and with a view to developing ideas around proximity and the confession of intimacy, I participated in *Sit with Me for a Moment and Remember* (2013), a one to one performance by artist Michael Pinchbeck. The piece featured as part of an evening of one to one performances in an event entitled *Live Art Dogging* at Primary Studios, a former school turned art venue in Nottingham.

Sit with Me for a Moment and Remember began with audience members being led from the performance venue to a park bench upon which we were invited to take a seat. I sat down and was handed a pair of headphones and asked to follow the instructions given by the voice in my ear. The voice in the headphones spoke about moments in places, with people from times long past. After a minute or so into the piece I was asked to close my eyes. The voice spoke of a girl, and after a few more seconds I was asked to open my eyes again, this time to see a young woman sitting next to me on the bench. I sat looking across the bench into the eyes of this woman who met my gaze with intensity. I was asked me to close my eyes once more and reach out my hand across the bench. At this point the woman took my hand and we sat for a few minutes hand-in-hand as the narrative continued. My eyes were closed but I knew she was still with me as our hands stilled gripped each other. A moment or two later the voice talked of remembering what has passed, and with this I felt her hand slip out of mine. I wanted to open my eyes but I felt so committed to following the instructions on the recording that I couldn't open them. I finally looked again when instructed, to see the space where she had sat, and with this the voice in my ear ended. Pinchbeck then entered the space and thanked me for my participation.

As I walked away from the bench and across the playground back to the venue I felt a tremendous sense of loss. It felt as if I would never see her again. The piece activated the feeling of being with someone and falling in love. Even as I write this text, the memory of the piece is so vivid and the sense of connection – although less powerful – still remains. Of course, the narrative is fictional and the woman is a performer, but what Pinchbeck had done

successfully was combine a series of elements that so deeply affected the state of the solitary audience member, a very real sense of human connection was produced. There was a true sense of exchange between two human beings and this exchange felt like we were involved in a process of becoming closer, socially.

Whilst writing about the experience of the work I wonder about the politics of being together in private and being together in public, and the ethics of intimacy with strangers. It was intimacy encouraged through performance that allowed me and the performer to become closer, and I question whether this sense of intimacy was something I imagined or was this felt sensation real, bringing me back to issues of reality and fantasy. I question what would have been different if this hadn't been a theatrical situation, what would have changed? As an audience-participant I made the agreement to participate and take responsibility for my thoughts during my experience. These felt senses produce inner thoughts that remain internal until such a time that they are written down. To share my experience produces another set of questions, and it is here I return to proximity and the distance between the confessor and the those with whom the confessor shares the confession.

3.3

Some Thoughts on the Mechanics of Confession

The act of documenting my intimate connection with the performer in Pinchbeck's piece, and my continual sharing of private experiences with others is done with the aim of using the act of the confession to become closer socially. Rather than keeping my thoughts to myself I confess to make sense of myself, but these texts will not be torn up like the Lacanian 'unsent letter' described by artist Claire Hind in reflecting on her performance *Peep* (2011) which will be discussed below. On the contrary, this is my 'sent letter'. It is a product that implicates me in moments of connectivity with others where I bear my soul in order to get to know others. In the piece *Hello I Love You*, which I discuss below, I explore how the ethics of working with participants is considered through the invitation for the audience-participant to have a 'right of reply'. This facility will be discussed in a moment but first I would like to consider the site of the confessional dialogue.

The site of my confession cannot be fixed within the space of an unsent/unread text. Nor does it simply exist between me and another individual in a one to one, mutually agreed situation like in the Catholic sacrament of confession. This confessional act and the confession itself operate across places and times: as my exchange with the young women on the bench, my exchange between my thoughts and this written text, and my exchange with you the reader of this thesis. The confession is site-specific in the way I define site-specificity: a process rather than fixed location. The process of the confession as I position it here does not run as smoothly as the Catholic sacrament of confession, with no clearly delineated rules of exchange between my confession and its recipients. Although the confessor cannot determine the priest's identity in Catholic confessional exchange, he knows that this exchange has physical and ritualised parameters. The confessional process that I am proposing here ruptures its physical and ritualised parameters, experiencing blockages and diversions as it adopts different registers and finds different paths through to different readers/recipients. Defining the confession in this way produces the potential to imagine confession as something not exclusive to spoken or written words, said or written in a single location to a single person. This is to propose a 'confessional becoming', or a practice of attempted reflective autobiography that forges interrelationality in a process of confession

and analysis. In *Site-Writing – the Architecture of Art Criticism* (2010) artist-scholar Jane Rendell positions the confession as ‘a construction rather than a revelation of the self’ (Rendell, 2010: 53). This statement speaks to my ideas of orientation written about earlier, supporting the notion of sociality as a process of becoming; a process that operates site-specifically, is never fixed, and is always in a state of movement. The confession, as Rendell points out, is a process in which the self finds its points of orientation, and rather than revealing itself, it continues its construction. This is key to how my fluctuation between participant and performer allows a becoming social through modes of confessing. In *Sit With Me For a Moment and Remember* the materiality of the young woman’s hand produced a sense of confessing through my body in the moment of holding, bringing proximity and intimacy together in a way that is physically closer than my research experiments before this point. I will go on to develop this line of thinking later in relation to artist Adrian Howells and his ideas of confessional body language, but before doing this I would like to present *Hello I Love You*, a performance made with intimate confession in mind.

3.4

Hello, I Love You



Figure 11. *Hello, I Love You*, (2013)

Dear Reader

At this point you are invited to access the video documentation of *Hello, I Love You*. The video is documentation of a performance where I attempted to fall in love with strangers, so if at this point you would like me to attempt to fall in love with you, then please give me a call. I promise to tell you that I love you and mean it.

07398 762808

I performed *Hello, I Love You* (2013) as part of '*A Better Tomorrow*' curated by Hatch at Embrace Arts Centre. The piece was composed of two chairs opposite each other on a mezzanine floor, separated by a hollow distance of around 20 feet. A rope was tied between the two handrails across the space as seen in the image below.



Figure 12. *Hello, I Love You*, (2013)

At allotted times participants were led up the stairs and asked to take a seat across from where I sat. Once seated I would stand up and walk over to my participants, hand them a card with my phone number printed on it, and then ask them to call me. I would then return to my seat and await their call. Upon answering I would proceed to tell them that it was my intention to try and fall in love with them in the short time we had together. I asked them to hold the rope so that there was a physical connection between us whilst we spoke. The distance between us meant that we could look into each other's eyes, but the gaze was over too greater distance to cause intimacy through eye-contact. The performances lasted for ten minutes, after which time an assist would arrive to lead the participant back downstairs. I sat with around twenty people individually over the course of the evening and together we spoke about many things in our attempts to connect and fall in love.

I began every conversation by asking for permission to try and fall in love with my participants. I would go on to ask them if they remembered the first time they fell in love and

to recall the place and events that figured in the memory. During the act of remembering, their eyes would drift from my gaze and they would begin thinking back, moving here and there between the place of the performance, the place of their memory, and the places being recalled. Through a process of moving back and forward in thought we were defying a stable location for the performance, calling proximity into question; our physical distance was imbricated with our mental distance as we moved between thoughts of other places whilst stationary in the site in which we were situated. I encouraged my participants to employ techniques of emotional recall in efforts to learn how we might connect to one another in that place and time by revisiting other places and times. This method quickly enabled us to engage in intimate conversations about those we were still in love with or whom we had loved and lost. Although unrehearsed, the structure of the conversations unfolded in similar ways with each of the people I spoke to. Each were asked if they had felt a connection with anyone they had met that evening. They were also encouraged to recall other moments when connections with strangers had affected them as they had gone about their daily lives.

One participant recalled how he had been sitting opposite someone on a train and how over the course of the journey he had constructed a narrative about being with that person, imagining what marrying them and having children with them would be like in 'reality'. He shared with me how he imagined what sort of arguments they might have and how they would resolve them. This kind of leap of imagination also took place in *Falling in Love Again - and Again*, where one of the participants in the piece imagined going on holidays to Norway with the stranger they had chosen to fall in love with. The man in *Hello, I Love You* who recalled imagining the daily life of being with the stranger sat opposite him performed the same overlaying of a fictitious narrative that I have discussed throughout the thesis. This leap of imagination as I have described it is a mode of being with strangers where one thinks creatively in order to locate oneself with another. It is an internal performance, or 'thought act' as I have described it previously, where one experiences a shift in the symbolic order of the place one is in, this shift leading to a series of mental and physical processes where one attempts to make sense of the thought.

Hello, I Love You encouraged participants to go on these emotional journeys back and forth through reality and fantasy. The man who imagined the woman on the train confessed that he hadn't really thought about moments like these until I had encouraged him to do so. The performance encouraged him to go back to that place and that moment, and in doing so had encouraged the sharing of something that we both agreed commonly happens between

strangers in transit. These imaginary moments are part of our processes of becoming social and, I argue, are as much mechanics of sociality as shaking hands or introducing oneself to another. Being with that stranger on the train existed both in this participant's imagination, but also in the physical reality of his body seated opposite her which allowed him to project forward beyond the confines of the train to a time that would never happen, and place that does not exist in terms of a discernible geographical location.

Placing ourselves in transitory states of imagining gives us the opportunity to think our way into the lives of the strangers who travel alongside us in our movements between places. As with all the performances presented in this thesis, *Hello, I Love you* is positioned as a site-specific performance where physical and geographically stable senses of place give way to temporary, fleeting and imaginative spaces to whom our proximity is uncertain. This positioning foregrounds the nomadic site-specificity of *Hello, I Love You*. In the very act of asking my interlocutors to think back to a time when they had connected inexplicably to a stranger, I was asking them to defy the present by digging down into the past. This archaeological manoeuvre is not uncommon in site-specific art, especially where the engagement with the histories of communities is concerned. However, the histories that I was asking my participants to engage with were imaginary events that perceived imaginary places. There are places past and present here, but there is also the place of the future to consider. In thinking back to an event that imagined relations with a stranger, the past is recalled, but that past is based predominantly in thought and fantasy, making the characteristics of that place arguably rather difficult to locate in the minds of my participants - this is where the places of the future play a part. In the act of recalling fantasy, a second stage of fantasy occurs where, in the moment of imagining the place past, the place future is also imagined to fill in the blanks that the memory cannot provide.

In this web of places, the locations of each become temporally and spatially uncertain. The places encountered during *Hello, I Love You* could be said to be *both/and, here/there* places, in that the places produced by the performance exist both there in the performance *and* elsewhere in the past/future. They are at once here and there, with a movement of location seemingly occurring simultaneously and our proximity to place and each other existing across a multiplicity of spaces. It is this nomadism that I position is analogous to the production of social subjectivity, and the action of being/falling in love is used as a method for encouraging people to explore movement between places of fantasy and reality. The conversational elements of the work in this chapter are key to how site-specificity and interrelationality

frame the research. The discursive nature of my practice and the sites it both evokes, creates and is situated in epitomises what Kwon describes as,

‘the distinguishing characteristic of today’s site-oriented art’, and ‘the way in which the artwork’s relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a discursively determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate’ (Kwon, 2002: 26).

Kwon points to a discursiveness that constitutes the site in site-specificity, but even in qualifying discussion, debate or exchange as sites, any stable ideas of locational specificity are questionable due to the inherent sense of movement implicit in the terms themselves. Attempting to unearth recollections of places and others in those places and then to perform the imaginary movement of falling in love with strangers causes an intellectual exchange through narratives that have nomadism at their core. The premise of a site whose discernible specificity relies on nomadic discursiveness evokes a reading of the conversations during *Hello, I Love You* as ‘a fragmentary sequence of events and actions through spaces’ (Kwon 2002: 29), where the researcher guides a collection of what Kwon describes as ‘nomadic narrative[s] whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist’ (2002: 29), or in this case researcher. In providing a passage I succeeded in connecting socially with my interlocutors in ways that the email below expresses eloquently:

Hello Stephen,

I don't know if you remember our conversation (you did have quite a few), but my name is ---- and I believe I was your third phone call of the evening. Firstly, I loved it! Looking into love as a topic of exploration for a collaborative live art piece I'm currently devising, I found the ethical topic of Can you fall in love with a stranger and mean it, really intriguing. My highlights have to be the instruction to hold the rope. That was so important for me, as when we spoke about it in our conversation, it felt like it enhanced the 'connection' even if there was a connection of some sort there. Without the rope, I don't think the piece would've been that powerful, and if the rope wasn't there, the audience member and yourself would've needed to be seated much closer.

I loved the spontaneity of the conversation. The fact that each conversation will be different, and working off each other to discuss deeper meanings behind love. I came away from the piece feeling a mixture of heart-warmth and sadness. Heart-warmth because of the topics we covered in conversation. Conversations like that are usually only shared with close friends, but to then talk to a stranger about my experiences on love were both relieving and warming to see another person have similar (or maybe even dis-similar views). Sadness because I wanted to continue talking. I felt such calm sitting there and talking to you that when the time was over, I felt we could've taken the conversation different places. I didn't want to leave. And ending the piece on the line 'I love you' left something tender, honest and personal with me. If I can walk away from a piece with both a smile on my face, and lots of un-answered questions at the same time, it's a winner for me!

It is definitely a performance that leaves an aftermath. Waking up this morning, I still remember the conversation, remember the rough feel of the rope, and the crispness of the Hello, I love you business card. Then receiving the message from you today suggests that there is a constant aftermath, reminding you that an impact may/may not have been left on the other person in the conversation. It has really inspired me to look into deeper and more ethical questions surrounding love. The glance- is there such thing as love at first sight? e.t.c...

Lastly, thank YOU very much for such a wonderful, immersive experience. One I won't forget for a while!

All the very Best

This respondent's reference to a 'constant aftermath' goes some way to articulating the sense of a reverberant or imagined future place as I described it earlier, and the comment that we 'could've taken the conversation different places' exemplifies the nomadic imaginary journey between physical and mental places that I have written about above. Through employing a particular performative mode of being together during *Hello, I Love You*, a sense of being together after was produced. In the context of this chapter's underlying themes of intimacy and proximity, there existed an intimacy between strangers created across the distance that allowed us to be close enough to see each other, but not too close that there was discomfort. Our process of being together existed in the space between our bodies, the space mediated by our mobile phone conversation, and, in the case of the participant who emailed me, the (cyber) space produced from a greater distance across our email communication. Our proximity to the people we recalled from our past is also intertwined in this process, with those distant people and places imbricated in our social interrelationality. As my respondent wrote down his feelings as they are detailed above, he once again entered into the place of the performance (past) to allow him to conceive of an aftermath (future), conveying a sense of then and now made possible by what remains, or more precisely, what becomes, after the social interaction (the performance).

The email was received after I sent a text message to all the participants who engaged with me during *Hello I Love You* inviting them to share their experience of the event via email. This invitation was given as a way to address some of the ethics of working with participants. In the introduction to the thesis I discussed the positioning of an ethics that operates in a 'with/about' framework. In Kester's discussions of Nealon's critique of Levinas and Bakhtin introduced earlier, Kester observes that '[w]hile Bakhtin describes a subjectivity that is formed through dialogical interaction, the ultimate goal of this interaction is the expansion of the authoring subject, for whom the other remains a mere vehicle' (Kester, 2004: 119). *Hello I Love You* was keen to address the conceptual concerns already positioned, whilst still attending to an ethics that sought to avoid an interrelationality where the researcher would 'use' his other as a 'mere vehicle' as Kester describes it. The email I received demonstrates the reciprocal interrelational value of *Hello I Love you*, with the words '*thank YOU very much for such a wonderful, immersive experience*' showing that there was an equity of dialogue took place.

In conclusion, mechanics of intimate exchange in one to one performance saw *Hello I Love You* bring me back into verbal contact with my participants, reducing proximity to the place of face to face contact. Here I worked purely on a one to one basis for the first time, bringing intimacy to the fore and using love as a shortcut to this intimacy. This part of the research revealed moments of intimacy between people through recalling the love of others. The mechanics of becoming social that I had been experimenting with in previous works were refined, with mobile phones still used as technologies to communicate intimate sentiments, but this time – in *Hello, I Love You* – physical proximity was closer than ever. Here awkwardness as a method of becoming social was made present, revealing how moments of tenderness can converge with moments of trauma. *Hello I Love You* was about tenderness and taking care of the journey my participants and I went on through past places and loves, and through retracing steps through intimate histories in a private shared moment together, awkwardness dissipated through efforts to put ourselves at ease. The piece was not performed in a closed space away from others. On the contrary, others could stand and listen whenever they chose to, posing questions about the parameters of private and public space. My attendance at the performance evening *Live Art Dogging* sought to explore further my questions around intimacy and proximity, with the aim of examining who is implicated in the production of intimacy and how close we need to be to our performer, participant and/or audience to be intimate.

3.5

Live Art Dogging

Live Art Dogging (2013) was a series of intimate one to one performances produced in front of a live audience and curated by practitioner-scholar Daniel Oliver. The booklet to accompany the event stressed that this was not an actual dogging event, but proceeded to outline rules taken from an actual dogging website just the same. It also contained a disclaimer, a map and some details and images of the artists involved. The first thing that I witnessed upon entering the space was a man rubbing the crotch and breasts of a fully clothed woman at the top of a small flight of stairs above me. The woman proceeded to slap the man, at which time he stopped. The artist was Owen Parry and the performance I had been witnessing was *Touching Feeling* (2013). It was not clear to me at the time of seeing the performance whether the woman was the artist, or the man, or both. I remember being conscious that it was a performance I was witnessing, so there must be some agreements that govern the physical interaction between the man and the woman? However, according to Oliver in a conversation we conducted after the event, Parry's only agreement with the audience members he selected was that upon agreeing for him to touch them, they could slap him at the point when they wanted it to stop. This action was repeated a little while later when Parry began rubbing the crotch of a man close to where I stood. The man slapped him and Parry stopped.

A statement on Parry's website claims that he 'explores the formation and destruction of value in contemporary art and performance practices by focusing on difficult and questionably legitimate engagements' (Parry, 2016), and as a witness to Parry's groping I felt a tension that did indeed evoke a difficulty in being able to locate an ethical position for myself. There was a part of me that resolved that this was performance, so maybe I could be free to enjoy a voyeuristic element of witnessing the sexual act that played out in front of me, safe in the knowledge that the ground rules were consensual and understood. The role performance plays here in providing license to desire that which is deemed impermissible outside the performance context provokes ethical concerns for the viewer and asks questions of intimacy, touch and the proximity between bodies. I had been party to an intimate moment along with a room full of other people, but there appeared to be an unclear sense of

permission to the exchange, and although the ground rules were apparently made clear, the violent act of slapping that signalled the end of the performance caused an uncomfortable sense of power imbalance.

This engagement was indeed difficult as Parry perhaps intended, but difficult for whom? As an audience member or ‘inter-passive voyeur’ as Oliver described it in the accompanying booklet, it was difficult to know how to feel about what was witnessed. A performance of this nature questions the ethical responsibility that the artist has to the audience. If Parry made clear what he intended to do to his direct collaborators, then it could be argued that positions of power are mutually agreed and equal from the start, but the slap that ended the sexual actions mitigate against this, and as an audience member I question my involvement as a witness to the action. There was, however, a certain amount of pleasure derived from the voyeuristic sight of something I was/wasn’t supposed to see, and this caused a tension in my qualification of where I figured in the piece and how I was perhaps implicated. Boundaries appear to be crossed and this raised questions of our social borders that I will go on to discuss later in the Chapter. *Touching Feeling* evoked a questioning of what it is to get to know someone through touch. The mechanics of becoming social that I have employed so far have used conversation as a tool to know more about my participants, with spoken language being at the fore. I questioned how other languages might figure in my research and how the confessional voice that I had begun to work with might be explored in other ways, namely body language.

In a conversation with practitioner-scholar Dee Heddon, performance artist Adrian Howells posed the question ‘is body language confessional’ (Howells, 2011: 7) and this resonates as I consider what it is to confess through touching and how this can be considered within the mechanics of becoming social I am formulating. I wondered what I would have said if Parry had asked me to participate. Would I have wanted him to touch me, probably not in the way he had touched the people I witnessed, but there was something about the trace that was left behind after he had made his physical transaction with his participant that altered the sociality of the situation. There is something about the touch of a stranger that I position is a form of social contact where momentarily one becomes more acutely aware of one’s position in social space; I felt it in the Pinchbeck piece and I witnessed it in Parry. Indeed, I would position physical contact with a stranger in a public place as an exchange that produces a unique kind of social interrelationality. Whether intentional or not, the moment when one makes physical contact with a stranger in a public place arouses one’s sense of personal space

in social space. This is a form of body language, but the language that this kind of physical act communicates is complex. When personal spatial parameters are breeched, one experiences a sensation of social space that intimately connects one with another. Here we get to know each other more intimately, if only for that split second of touch. Parry's way of touching in *Touching/Feeling* could be described as groping, and I am not suggesting that groping one another in public places will somehow make us all closer socially, however I am suggesting that there is something in an unexpected physical transaction that generates a confessional body language where one's social anonymity is lessened by one's body. There often also follows a series of social performances where one either apologises for the physical exchange, or pretends it hasn't happened. The minds of the recipients of physical encounters become a place where the language of the unsaid continues the internal confession.

The ethical uncertainty encountered in unexpected haptic situations as one senses discomfort or arousal is caused by a break in the chain of social cognition. I define haptic situations here in relation to the broad field of haptic communication as opposed to that of haptic perception, using the term to define those situations which involve touch and which transgress the boundaries of personal physical space. Performances that confront us with this evoke questions of what it is to be with others socially in a physical sense. The moment in *Sit With Me For a Moment and Remember* where the stranger on the bench took my hand in hers caused a shift in my social cognition. I immediately felt more connected to her through the connection of our touch. The touch encouraged me to think about our interrelationality differently. It was a social catharsis where I was able to acknowledge a desire to know and be with other social subjects in more intimate ways; a way of becoming social through confessional body language.

In an article discussing her 2009 one-to-one performance *Peep*, practitioner-scholar Claire Hind reflects on how, in composing a situation that allows the audience to unburden themselves of their confessions, a catharsis takes place where the freedom to express one's ethical uncertainty occurs. *Peep* saw audience members destroy texts made from their own personal confessions at the site of a mock confessional booth constructed by the artist. Individuals were also asked to perform a 'hybrid of the character Frank Booth' from the David Lynch film *Blue Velvet* (1986), reading a line from a performance text given to them in advance. In the film the Frank Booth character plays a dangerous and violent criminal who acts out his desires in a disturbing way. The scene where one of Frank's sexual acts is witnessed by the character Jeffery from inside a cupboard is much written about in film and

performance theory (see Laura Mulvey in *Performance Analysis*, 2001). The scene explores positions of power, desire and vulnerability as the camera switches the gaze between all characters involved, including the cinema going audience. In a 2011 Performance Research Journal article Hind poses the question ‘does Frank Booth represent our fears and desires?’ This is a brave question to ask, but there may be some truth in it, as one of the participants in *Peep* illustrates:

‘I met Frank. The truth is there is something I quite like about Frank you know? I’m a decent person but there is something very likeable about Frank isn’t there? It is nice to have a chance to admit that. I think that this will sit with me for quite some time. It was very affective, quite deeply affective actually. In some ways it was revealing because there is such freedom in allowing that darker aspect of self to be revealed, yet in other ways there is another side of me that would hate people to consider me in that way’ (Participant in *Peep*, cited in Hind, 2011).

Parry’s *Touching Feeling* raises these same kinds of questions I consider what it is to become social through the confession of things usual kept private. How much of our ‘darker’ aspects of self are we free reveal, and to whom? An erotic and perhaps illicit act was witnessed in *Touching Feeling*, and an immediate and confusing interplay of desire and condemnation was caused that left me, as an implicit participant, in a moral and ethical position. Being an audience member or witness to the performances in *Live Art Dogging* offered the possibility to question what is desire, and beyond this encouraged the admission of our ethically uncertain selves. The witnessing of an act of seemingly illicit erotic performance is different to a real life witnessing of a questionably permissible or consensual erotic act however, in that there is a tacit theatricality attached by virtue of this being a performance event. This is not to say, however, that the same state of simultaneous desire and condemnation might not occur in real situations, it is just that a kind of ethical ‘get out clause’ can be argued in a performance context. This argument only goes so far though and we are forced to question whether what we witness is real or performed. The qualification of reality is a perhaps never ending task though, so as viewers, we are back to the question of what should we feel, and should we feel bad about it?

How much ethical responsibility to the other audience members who might be looking on does Parry have, and further to that, how much responsibility to his consensual one to one

participants does he have also? A trialectics of power made *Touching Feeling* unique in the context of one to one performance, in that the addition of a voyeuristic third party brings instability to the agreements of artist and selected participant. The ethical clarity that Parry establishes with his participant is somewhat cemented by their mutual agreement, but destabilized by the inclusion of the onlooker. A third space occurs as a consequence of the performance's spilling from the frame of privacy usually afforded by one to one performance. The usual dialectical agreements of the one to one situation are here neither agreed, nor disagreed, but instead become both agreed and disagreed at one and the same time due to the presence of others. Parry's *Touching Feeling* performances were not made on stage and were not frequent enough to guarantee that the whole audience saw them. On the contrary, they appeared to be sly gropes hidden from the view of others. The feeling of an illicit glimpse of something private made these works all the more alluring, but it is this very sense of illicitness that destabilizes ethical certainties. Akin to overhearing a conversation in a public place, the line between public and private is transgressed and social relationships develop an accidental intimacy that connects us in ways that are unexpected and troubling. I wondered about the levels of intimacy involved in seeing others touch, and the differences in power relations when, rather than being the one seeing the touching, I became the one being touched. To research this notion I participated in artist Traci Kelly's *Touch vs Touch* (2013).

As a participant in *Touch vs Touch* I felt a different sense of how power is balanced between two strangers when in physical contact with one another. *Touch vs Touch* evoked a sense of harmony rather than difficulty and awkwardness. At our allotted times, we were invited onto the stage and asked by Kelly where on our bodies we would like her to place her hands before uniting in a hug. A shot of rum was shared and an embrace began. As I stood held in a momentary meeting of bodies on a stage I felt a shifting in my sense of self for the duration of the embrace. The longer we stood there, the more comfortable it became and the more acute our breathing seemed. The hug lasted for only a minute or so and was brought to a halt by the ringing of a bell to signify the next participant. As I stepped off the stage I was able to stand and cast an empathetic gaze over Kelly and her next partner. The sense of being led on and off the stage in an orderly fashion to perform something as intimate as a tight embrace with another person exposed an economics of intimacy in this one to one performance. We were led on and off the stage, so we had the ability to stand and watch the intimate moments from our place in the queue.

Touch vs Touch made intimacy possible due to the encouragement of touch, and to evoke Howells again, the body language that Kelly and I shared felt mutually confessional. The close physical proximity of the piece allowed an exchange powerful enough to block out the audience of onlookers whilst I was up on the stage, but once I became one of those onlookers, my sense of intimacy with the performer ended as others took my place. This sense of being replaced encouraged me to transgress the tacit agreements that had been established and the etiquette that dictated where the onlookers should stand. After a few minutes of watching other people hold Kelly's embrace, I walked over to the stage and stood as close as I could to the figures hugging on stage without physically getting up there with them. This allowed me to look into the eyes of the audience member hugging the artist at that moment, and I remember that moment of eye-contact and the feeling that I had subverted the rules of their engagement. I had met the gaze of the confessor whilst in the act of confession. The body language of Kelly and her participant spoke a particular intimate language that they contained between themselves, but my position as onlooker and my ability to make eye-contact with the participant ruptured their bodily conversation. By looking into my eyes the participant stopped performing with/for Kelly, and instead started performing for both Kelly and myself. He could have closed his eyes to erase me from the embrace but he didn't. I wanted to generate an awkwardness that tied the three of us together.

The awkwardness caused by my intervention mirrors the tension that can be felt as one navigates one's way through everyday interactions and the challenges navigating what Tonkiss describes as the 'fictional ties' which we invent to make sense of social space (Tonkiss, 2005: 24). This sense of navigating awkwardness whilst attempting to maintain order can be seen in what Goffman might position as a dramaturgy of being social, where the tacit interplay between people (or teams as Goffman would describe it) sees roles played out and order maintained. There is an implicit generosity that can be read into my positioning of Goffman, where turning a blind eye to the observation of one's awkwardness helps to ease the trauma of the traumatised in a 'bond of reciprocal dependence' (Goffman, 1959: 88). This idea of sharing resonates in the performances I have made and written about here. In the same way that Goffman points to a sharing of the trauma of awkwardness, the act of confessing intimate autobiographical details to strangers - rather than being antisocial - is in fact a performance of being social, where we bear our souls in an effort alleviate the uncertainty of not knowing each other. By virtue of not knowing each other there exists a social unpredictability and the effects of this interrelationality can be traumatic.

I recall the times that I have been with people that I did not know in social situations, especially in pubs, bars and restaurants after drinking alcohol, where intimate details of abjection are disclosed as people become more familiar with one another. Here it is the confessions of intimate histories that I position as performances of becoming social, performances *What's So Funny about Piss, Blood: An Understanding* (2012) reflect back on an audience.

3.6

What's So Funny About Piss, Blood: An Understanding?

Dear Reader

At this point you are invited to hear the moment I asked an audience to share their own tales of embarrassment, awkwardness and abject horror with me and the others in the room, accessible this via the documentation entitled *What's So Funny About Piss, Blood: An Understanding?* The piece was performance lecture shown at the Oriel Mostyn gallery in North Wales in 2012 as part of *With Humorous Intent*, a symposium curated by practitioner-scholar Lee Campbell exploring the use of humour in performance research. The video you see here is an edited extract from the performance, which I will discuss briefly below, which explored the possibilities of attempting to become social with a group of strangers by sharing stories of abjection and traumatic personal histories. It is not my intention to discuss the piece in any great length here as it was an experiment to lead onto further subsequent works.

What's So Funny About Piss, Blood: An Understanding? used humour to deal with potential awkwardness, embarrassment, and trauma, with the deployment of humour used as a mechanic to cope with moments where 'proper' sociality (Grosz, 2001: 143) breaks down. Through this performance, I wanted to find out what we are willing to share with one another and where the borders of our publicness and privacy reside. In *Performance Analysis* (2001) Colin Counsell and Laurie Wolf refer to the body's surface as a 'notional border' (2001: 141), and it is through the sharing of tales of where the body's borders breakdown that I hoped to question the lines between public and private. My recollection of a moment of 'Spanish tummy' relived a time where the surface of my body ruptured and the threshold between inside and outside was unexpectedly crossed. My aim in *What's So Funny About Piss, Blood: An Understanding?* was to set the ground for *Host and Host(s)* by continuing to explore how intimacy through conversation might see the borders and thresholds of public and private crossed as strangers begin to trust their hosts. This performance was a test piece to generate textual material for *Host and Host(s)*, where borders and thresholds would be crossed in more intimate and closely proximate ways than at any piece previously.

3.7

Host and Host(s)



Figure 13. *Host*, (2013)

Dear Reader

At this point you are invited to watch the video documentation of *Host and Host(s)*. *Host* is extended video documentation of the performance of the same name, shot by an audience member using a camera I handed to her moments before beginning the piece. *Host(s)* is a short video documenting a few minutes of the piece with my recollections of the piece added.

Host and its subsequent iteration *Host(s)*, performed in 2013 and 2014 respectively are the performances that conclude the thesis and converge elements from the experiments that went before. In the conclusion that follows these works, I will discuss how *Host and Host(s)* sit within a cohesive frame alongside the other performances written about here, but before doing this I will discuss them in their own right. The performances themselves are written about at length as the thesis draws to a conclusion, with particular attention paid to some of the individual participants with whom I interacted. As these works employed a closer degree of one to one proximity and intimacy than the performances that went before them, the

writing below pays attention to the nuances of conversation and physical interaction using an often descriptive tone to support what can be seen in the video document that accompanies this writing.



Figure 14. *Host(s)*, (2014)

As a first point of departure I would like to turn our attention to writer Jim Haynes. Haynes has been hosting supper clubs in his Paris apartment for over 30 years, and before this was an important part of the early British experimental theatre scene in the 1960s. I met Haynes in Paris in 2010 and was moved by his generosity and his desire to connect strangers through food and conversation. In his words

‘All ages, nationalities, races, professions, etc spend three hours in my atelier. I introduce them all to each other. I enjoy the random factor. This creates a fission, an excitement. I like introducing people to people. If I had my way, I would introduce the whole world to each other. All human history is mine. My roots cover the earth. Now, more than ever, our lives are all connected’ (Haynes, 2016).

As both maker and audience member in the performances discussed in this chapter so far, I have asked questions and explored issues surrounding intimacy, confession, dialogue and haptic interaction, and it is with these themes and Haynes’ thoughts on interconnectivity in

mind that I created *Host* (2013). What the final works in the thesis add to these themes are ideas around generosity and hospitality, with autobiographical performance (a term defined below) and the writings of Heddon supporting the exploration of these themes. Trust has been discussed above in the context of creating situations with strangers where they feel comfortable enough to share autobiographical histories, but what the following works introduce to this is an exploration of how hosting a stranger might speak to the questions of intimacy and proximity. To remind the reader of these questions, Chapter 2 asked how, through, positioning site as a process rather than fixed location, can the material of place, space and human experience become imbricated to produce new insights into interrelationality; this chapter investigates what this imbrication reveals about the potentials of intimacy and proximity in the context of site-specific performance and social space.

Both *Host* and *Host(s)* were performances that involved the exchange of personal histories with the addition of the action of hand feeding. Where they differ is in the fact that *Host* was a one to one performance where I interacted with one audience member at a time, but in *Host(s)* several other performers were employed to hand feed our participants. As I write about both these works I will explore the themes and methods that link them both whilst giving individual analyses where necessary.

Host was created for Little Wolf Parade, an evening of live art that took place in a large empty shop in Nottingham, curated by artist Rachel Parry. There were several performances taking place simultaneously and the space that I occupied was situated between a kitchen and toilet in what would have been the back of the shop. This space measured approximately 7ft by 10ft so was small enough to explore intimacy through close physical proximity, and its situation between a kitchen and a toilet assisted in the playful thematic use of abjection, awkwardness and embarrassment.

The piece involved inviting participants to sit opposite me and share the food I had cooked for them in the adjacent kitchen. There were three chairs in the space: two opposite one another where a participant and I would sit, and one to the side of us for my co-performer Julian Woodcock. As participants entered the space I approached them and asked them if they would like to sit with me and share some moments together. Not knowing what *Host* was about or what it would entail, these participants were incidental in their participation and usually simply in the space to use the toilet or kitchen.

Once seated, my participants and I spoke to each other with Woodcock transcribing parts of the conversation, interspersed with his thoughts and reflections which were written onto an iPad that was connected to a data projector. This text was projected onto the wall of the space and worked as a live document of the event, or an act of confessional site writing to evoke the language of Rendell seen earlier in the thesis. Woodcock remained seated throughout the piece, whereas I moved between my chair and the kitchen adjacent to our seats. His role was that of a pseudo-analyst, transcribing verbatim text from the dialogue with my participants, whilst at intervals writing his own observations and judgements as if eaves-dropping on a private conversation and making sense of it. Due to both the pace of our conversations and Woodcock's typing ability, what resulted was a broken text comprised of half-finished lines of dialogue. The dialogue that my participants and I engaged in involved the exchange of confessions, developing themes explored in the works above.

Using technology in ways that create disjointed and clumsy results has been a deliberate performance mechanic throughout, and *Host* continues with this approach. Once again, a microphone and small amplifier were used to amplify my voice, even though the size of the space did not require this. I also failed to install a microphone stand, confident that this deliberate oversight would force my participants and I to figure out how the piece would function. In the same way seen in *Creating Forms in Dialogic Space*, there would have to be some audience intervention to maintain some compositional order. This is a deliberate method employed to encourage interaction and physical dialogue between my participants and I, and can be seen at play with the first participant in the accompanying film footage above.

Once my participants were seated, I explained that my intention was to feed them the food I had cooked, and in return maybe we might share something with each other that hadn't been shared before in this way. A dialogue would take place where they would be encouraged to share or confess something to me whilst I placed food in their mouths. Once this agreement had been understood, I proceeded to hand feed them. A scene was set where acts of social exchange were played out on a more intimate level than is usual, in that strangers will routinely eat in shared social spaces with one another but the act of hand feeding is less common.

To propose this action to my participants was to cause a rethinking of what it is to be hospitable. I welcomed them into the space I had created but my welcome was conditional on the agreement to interrelate on an intimate level beyond what is socially expected between strangers. My agreements demonstrated hospitality and this hospitality would operate within the site-specific frame that my previous works sat, in that the location of the performance space would become imbricated with places recalled and stories exchanged. These places were sites of memory; places we felt young, places we fell in love, places we were from. The sites of my participants' bodies also became porous and would leak and be penetrated as they allowed their physical and emotional borders to be opened through the act of placing a spoon loaded with food inside their mouths.

As in the performances I have made and written about through this thesis, here there is attention paid to exchanges with strangers, and how the borders of our bodies can be explored alongside the locational borders of memory and experience as we move back and forth in thought, recollecting our histories in an effort to get to know each other. *What's so funny about Piss, Blood: an Understanding?* played with the abject body and what it is to share one's embarrassing social failings with strangers - finding humour in the breeching of the social body's borders. *Host* played with elements of what this previous piece experimented with. *Host* would see the provision of hospitality, but there was the implicit agreement that my participants would listen whilst I confessed my stories of abjection and border breeching. I placed the food in their mouths as they recalled their places of history and together we moved back and forth whilst remaining seated.

The performance site's proximity to the toilet allowed awkwardness and abjection to be explored further. I would punctuate the conversations with my participants to engage with people going in and out of the toilet, asking them about their experience there with questions around how highly they rated it as a private space. This was a deliberate method of interaction that established playful dialogue that, whilst creating an awkwardness, generated a level of mutual embarrassment just sufficient enough to put us at ease with one another. Compositionally the seats and projector suggested a performance space that, as the performer, I had implicit ownership of, but the toilet was a shared space that was both public and private. The evocation of embarrassment and awkwardness, through both the questioning of personal histories and the confrontation of people entering or leaving a toilet, brings with it ethical questions that I will discuss here briefly.

When making work where there is a large degree of autobiographical performance there is a responsibility that the performer has to his participants. It is worth at this point defining my use of the term autobiographical performance in this context, and Heddon's definition as performance 'which foregrounds some aspect of a life-story' (Heddon, 2010: 8) is suitable. In exchanging moments of life stories with my participants it is not my desire to make those I interact with uncomfortable, on the contrary, it is my discomfort that I endeavour to use as a mode of creating an ease with my participants. The work in this thesis explores how the social self is relational, and I position this interrelationality as a space that create potentials for shared ethics.

To give some consideration to ideas around shared ethics, interrelationality and working with participants, I would turn to Heddon's proposal for ethical alternatives to the dominant models that imply a fixed notion of self - a model which supports the fluid construction of relations born of the conversational methods I write about and employ here. Heddon writes,

'autobiography has traditionally been understood as an unearthing or revealing of the deep (typically hidden) self. Ethical appeals to tell the truth, or say it correct, are similar appeals to a knowable fixed subject. (...) such a self – an individual, autonomous subject – is itself a discursive construct' (Heddon, 2010: 151).

The idea of a discursive construct implies the formation of social selves that are in a process of becoming, and whose ethics are negotiated *in* this process of becoming. 'Every self is also', Heddon argues 'relational', and she goes further to ask,

'perhaps, then, as stated, appeals to ethics in the field of representation, particularly the representation of others, problematically assume in advance some idea of the original, to which representation can then remain faithful' (Heddon, 2010: 151).

To deny the fixity of the social selves who interact in the performances created here is to propose social situations where our stories become narratives that represent the becoming of the performance, performer and participant. Our shared moments of embarrassment,

awkwardness, humility and abjection become methods and themes to get to know one another by during the performance, where any idea of our original or faithful selves is disrupted by the layers of past, present and future our conversation produce. Any ideas of fixed social selves are purposely destabilised as we encounter intimate and at times awkward moments with one another. Our personal histories become initial narratives that represent ourselves, but in the layers of understanding and misunderstanding, our stable social selves are unpicked and a shared ethics of permissibility is encountered.

With ethics in mind, it is my responsibility to manage this dialogue and sense when our shared confessions begin to compromise those that agree to participate. This is achieved by expert management of the performance situation and careful hosting skills, skills that I position as the formal mechanics of the work and which I discuss below in my main explication of the work. One of the aims of *Host* was to explore hospitality, which itself is a problematic term which the piece seeks to exploit, whilst foregrounding the premise that this is indeed a performance of confessional modes and interrelationality which positions an ethical process that recognises that ‘autonomy’ ‘is a problematic concept’ (Heddon, 2010: 151).

The hospitality that Haynes practices during his Parisian supper clubs is a different kind to that which *Host* performed, however, like *Host*, there is still the tacit expectation that the guest will participate in a particular way by engaging in lesser or greater conversation with others depending on the will of the particular individual. It is implicitly understood that to remain silent and simply watch while Haynes’ other guests talk amongst themselves is not the etiquette of the situation, and, in *Host*, there is also a requirement that my participants should engage in conversation with me in order for the piece to operate in the intended way.

One of the conditions of *Host* was the agreement that I would literally ‘do the feeding’, exploring the agreements of social hospitality through the site-specific frame that I have been working in. Through my transactions and agreements with my participants I moved between stable locations in a process of becoming social through the exploration of sites of memory, sites of fantasy and the site our of physical bodies. I embraced the openness of becoming on several levels to know what the potentials of social interaction are, and, as mentioned earlier, it is the ‘openness to the process of becoming’ social as understood through Massey that I explore through performance, and this openness was in operation in *Host*.

Openness suggests potential passage into or through the thing we encounter whilst in the process of becoming social. In *Host*, there is literal openness as the body opens to receive the food on the spoon – the lips being the threshold which, once crossed, signifies entry into another place: the inside. It is the border that allows the body as site to become accessible once agreements have been put in place. There is also the emotional openness as my participants agree to share their intimate histories with me; they both mentally and physically open up. Indeed, one of my participants in *Host* described herself as a “very open person”, “open up then” was my response as I placed the food in her mouth and crossed the threshold that separates outside from in.

To expand on this reference to the threshold I will use philosophy scholar Marie-Eve Morin’s analysis of Jacques Derrida’s discussions on hospitality and the home. Morin comments that the threshold ‘functions both as the place of closure and the place of openness. It defines the rules of belonging and not-belonging, it separates the inside from the outside, but at the same time it delineates the criterion that will allow for the passage’ (Morin, 2015: 31). Levels of trust have to be established by both Haynes and his guests and me and my participants, and it is here where ideas of belonging to a wider interconnected social fabric become possible, where thresholds are crossed once trust is gained. In consideration of ethics again, I would turn to a wider ethics akin to those which Morin explores in relation to Derrida’s writing on ethics and Bruno Latour’s discussion of the ‘spatial’ turn in contemporary thinking. It is not the intention of this thesis to examine in greater detail these ethics, rather it is to pursue a trajectory that is mindful of Latour’s ideas of cohabitation and Massey’s critique of Latour’s ideas. Massey’s critique displays ‘reservations’ (2004: 147) about Latour’s reflections on coexistence and his formulation that ‘we are slowly moving from an obsession with time to an obsession with space’ (Latour, cited in Massey, 2005: 147), which in her view has a ‘flavour of linear temporality’ (2004: 147). Where Massey supports the arguments that are played out in my performance is in her call for ‘a politics of the negotiation of relations, configurations’ (...), ‘practices of relationality’ (2005: 147). In critiquing the term coexistence, she stresses emphasis on ‘conformation’ and the ‘inevitability of conflict’. This view, posits Massey,

‘does not eliminate an impetus to forward movement, but it does enrich it with a recognition that that movement be itself produced *through* attention to configurations; it is out of them that new heterogeneities, and new configurations, will be conjured’ (2005: 147).

In returning to the conditionality of hospitable then, mindful of senses of belonging and Massey’s acknowledgment of the inevitability of conflict, how does one reconcile these elements in a conformation of social space? *Host* asks this question and exploits the inevitability of conflict through the employment of tactics of awkwardness. If we understand *Host* to do what its name suggests, then those who I host become my guests, but guests with whom I will challenge with hosting tactics which subvert the expectations of a host.

In inviting people into a space that will be temporarily cohabited (Haynes in his ‘real’ domestic context and me in performance), questions around trust and the creation of shared space arise. The invitation to share space is to propose cohabitation of sorts. When I ask you to sit with me and tell me something you haven’t told anyone else whilst you trust me to hand feed you, I enter into cohabitation with you, in the agreement that this space has conditions that are particular to you and I, and the (co)formation of social space relies on our particular occupancy. With this in mind then, I had to find ways to gain trust, ways to embrace the inevitability of conflict, ways to recognise that our movement forward is created by performance methods that pay attention to our configurations. To begin an analysis of the mechanics used to pay attention to our configurations and production of a relational shared space, I will situate a question posed in a critique of *Host(s)* written by art writer Wayne Burrows. To clarify, *Host(s)* was an iteration of *Host* performed as part of the NEAT Festival in 2014 and is seen in the image below.



Figure 15. *Host(s)*, (2014)

The piece was performed in an alleyway close to Nottingham City Centre, and like *Host*, involved the hand feeding of strangers in exchange for personal histories. The difference between the two performances was that *Host* involved one to one conversation between a single participant and myself, whereas *Host(s)* saw several performers working one to one with participants alongside me, however the critique of the mechanics employed can be applied to both performances. Burrows writes

‘On one level, *Host(s)* is an uncomplicated staging of social generosity, in which guests are fed and attentively listened to, but this structure also echoes focus groups and corporate strategies, inviting us to trade our privacy and independence for an illusion of caring and belonging from our service providers. Does *Host* itself have a concealed agenda? Or is the social context driving instinctive distrust of a situation like *Host* being temporarily set aside in a small, utopian gesture?’ (Burrows, 2016)

The ‘illusion’ that Burrows refers to speaks to the performativity of the situation and the acknowledgment that this is a performance and our conversations are part of a performance situation, whose aim is less about understanding what love is (a conversational theme in *Host(s)*) or producing care and belonging, but rather more about exploring how these themes work to produce new situations of social interrelationality. Whilst we are indeed sharing life stories and autobiographies, these narratives are exchanged in the knowledge that we are

performing, and that our performing selves fluctuate between modes of being social that blurs the line between who is a participant and who is a performer. Indeed, as Burrows points out, 'it's hard to tell exactly who is a 'host' and who a 'guest' here'. The 'metacommunicative message' as discussed earlier that Bauman comments tells the audience when the performer is performing is blurred here, and the subject matter and its honesty and authenticity become more questionable as a consequence. My participants and I perform versions of ourselves in relation to one another and our social subjectivities are constructed through the exchange of food for thought.

The 'trade' that Burrows refers to is indeed an exchange between me as the performer or 'service provider' and my participants or 'guests', but this trade cannot be definitively qualified as an illusion as I do indeed care about the participants and I do want to make them feel like they belong. It is my responsibility to activate this belonging and to do so I attempt to find common ground with my participants. Massey talks about philosopher Henri Bergson's proposition of 'throwing oneself into the past' (Massey, 2005: 194), a proposition I mobilise in my attempts at retracing mental steps through our personal geographies in conversation. Massey's reading of Bergson identifies parallels with thinking spatially, parallels within which 'the specifics of response and connectivity can be situated' Massey, 2005: 194). *Host* and *Host(s)* follows this formulation with the intention of creating belonging through response and connection, where connections to our pasts create connections in our present.

The responsibility I referred to above involves carefully managing my connectivity with others and the handling of their responses to my questions. Indeed, as Massey writes, 'responsibility, like hospitality, in some accounts can be read in terms of a one-way-ness (a kind of hierarchical geography of responsibilities) which itself arrogates unto the responsible figure the superiority of a position of power' (2005: 194). The ethics of participation are again attended to here through the promise that I will handle my participants' journeys between places with care, this trust allowing a threshold to be crossed where a sense of togetherness allows a move forward beyond the contracts of strangers. The actions I perform as food is exchanged for life stories exist at a border, and indeed threshold, that creates a situation where readings of belonging and not-belonging fluctuate. The threshold, as pointed out through Morin above, 'functions both as the place of closure and the place of openness'

and through the embrace of this flux I create situations where performance reveals the mechanics of our social becoming in all their uncertain and at times awkward forms.

The trust and responsibility discussed here is troubled if we consider that my performances purposefully play between reality and fantasy, as with this interplay an inauthenticity occurs that makes it hard for the participant to know what parts of our connection are real and which I am exploiting for the sake of a more interesting performance. To attempt to prove where authentic conversations begin and performance dialogue ends is not the job of this thesis, it is more my intention to explore and exploit this fluctuation and illustrate this threshold. Through the creation of situations where we are physically knee-to-knee asking and answering questions about love produces a performance situation which allows intimacy and proximity to be understood in ways unique to this performance practice. The question of whether these intimate moments and exchanges represent ourselves or a conceit played out in performance is difficult to answer, but, as Burrows points out,

‘Much rests on that combination of questions about love – the shortest of short-cuts to intimacy and personal exposure – and the gesture of hand-feeding, which is both literally and symbolically placing us in a position where we allow ourselves to be spoon-fed by strangers with unknown motives. The feeding could be experienced as a comforting reversion to infancy, or the substitution of an intimate gesture for the real connections of intimacy itself, or simply a genuine moment of intimacy in a public space. As with the simultaneously real *and* synthetic connections of social media, exactly how we process the experience of *Host* – and whether we fully or partly trust, or refuse, its seductions – is left entirely in our own hands’ (Burrows, 2014).

The ‘real *and* synthetic’ connection that Burrows writes about speaks to the creation of performance where the real and imaginary are positioned as places in their own right, something written about through the thesis. The confessions that my participants and I share may indeed be true, but through the use of memory as a function to recall this material, it is susceptible to the dramatization that confessing in a performance context might evoke. *Host* is purposefully clumsy in maintaining its confessional truth, encouraging participants to fill in the gaps that I leave to their imagination. This method seeks to defy the state of being ‘unavoidably caught up in the confessional apparatus’s potential effect – the production and

maintenance of ‘truths’, that Heddon comments is familiar to autobiographical performance (Heddon, 2010: 163).

At this point I will begin to focus on some of the specific moments of exchange encountered in *Host*, beginning with the documentation of the piece which was captured by an audience member who I asked to play the role of camera person. She had no knowledge of what the piece would entail and received no instructions or guidance from me. This is a documentation strategy that I have used before and is something I do purposefully to both encourage an interactivity between my audience and the work, but also to produce a voyeuristic aesthetic in the film footage. The film focuses on several of the participants that I engaged with on a one to one level, whilst also capturing moments of audience intervention and engagement.

I will begin with my interaction with a woman I will describe as Participant 1. My first exchange with this participant was my request for her to take a seat whilst I momentarily went to the kitchen to fetch her food. It was Woodcock’s role to keep people company during these moments where I would leave the immediate performance space. The dynamic between Woodcock and I deliberately contained tension, with particular moments where our positions in the social hierarchy were uncertain. This deliberate method of interaction was designed to give the impression to our guests that not all the elements of this performance had been thought-out fully. The first example of this was when I returned from the kitchen and interrupted the conversation between Woodcock and Participant 1 by picking up the microphone and rudely interrupting their dialogue with the words “ok, thank you”.

Experiments in tension and awkwardness ensued as I asked Participant 1’s name two or three times in the conceit that I had forgotten it the first time. My purposeful disorganisation and uncertainty was compounded further as I fumbled with the microphone and food container, thinking out loud and asking myself how best to make things work. Through my display of ineptitude, Participant 1 did what I expected her to do and came to my aid by offering to support me in my efforts to perform properly. She felt compelled to act as a member of what Goffman would describe as the ‘team’, attempting to co-operate in the ‘understanding’ of the situation and aid its proper function (Goffman, 1959: 85). Just as the audience member did when the Skype connection failed in *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space*, Participant 1 quickly tried to rescue the situation from failing and help take care of things.

Once I had re-established our roles, refusing her help and clarifying my immediate intentions, I asked her if I could hand feed her. She remarked that she “hadn’t been fed by hand since she was a baby” and that she “liked it”. My next attempt at haptic interaction was refused as she denied my request to move her hair from her face. Rather than let me touch her hair she moved it herself, clearly demonstrating that this would be overstepping the mark in terms of physical acceptability. This refusal was turned into a humorous moment to avoid unnecessary awkwardness, but did however demonstrate how the parameters of intimacy between strangers extend to hand feeding but not touching someone’s hair in this context. The etiquettes of the situation began to be established, mirroring the organic shift between tacit agreements in social space as subjects communicate to establish their social positions and express their intentions. My participant and I performed this routine, setting out what Goffman might describe as our promissory characteristics, communicating and miscommunicating in a process of understanding and misunderstanding what we were to offer one another. The contractual performance between participant and performer in Parry’s *Touching Feeling* resonated here as permission was granted for certain participatory actions and not others.

The initial agreements of Host centred on food and conversation and the parameters of these agreements were governed by their context. Here there were two people seated close together next to a kitchen with a performer signifying the offering of food by moving around space with a tea towel over his shoulder, feigning the role of the waiter-cum-host. Waiters and dinner party hosts don’t touch each other’s hair so perhaps, neither should we? Even though this was a performance situation and therefore imbued with the theatrical deceit of any other, the dramatic context of the dinner party governed the initial social gestures. In performance, the act of touching, or haptic interaction as I have referred to it above, remains governed by its social context as understood in everyday life, even though, arguably, social contexts become void when the performance, with its own unique set of contextual agreements, begins. What I mean by this is that a work of live art or performance provides a general context, with the content often evolving without the scripted interplay of a traditional performance. This, in theory, should, and often does, allow the creation of content that bears little resemblance to social interactions as we traditionally understand them. The refusal to allow the intimacy of touching a stranger’s hair was perhaps in part due to this individual’s

desire to maintain a physical distance, but was, I suspect, also due to the context of the performance aesthetic and site.

We encounter haptic interaction of varying degrees in social contexts all time, from visiting the hair salon to shaking the hand of people we are introduced to for the first time, but, and at risk of stating the obvious, these contexts strictly dictate their context and we struggle to erase this tacit propriety when participating in performance. As I have stated above, it is my intention to create performance situations where ‘real’ exchanges and those of fantasy and seeming inauthenticity collide. I am well aware, and have stated so, how, in a research context, authenticity and inauthenticity is hard to prove. The discussion of Howells’ work below begins to position both the problems of asserting authentic experience.

In *Salon Adrienne* (2005), Howells washes his participants’ hair whilst engaging in conversation with them. *Salon Adrienne* can be described as an autobiographical performance in that life stories are exchanged, and in the context of my research it is relevant as it takes as its site the actual hair salon, building content as the participants and Howells gradually deepen their conversations using places of personal history and experience. He is, however, acutely aware of the tension caused in work that claims authenticity. In his words, he ‘prioritizes interpersonal connectedness’ and the ‘authentic experience between two people (though the question of “authenticity” in the field of performance is always vexed)’ (Howells, 2011: 2).

The rules of touching are clear as Howells’ site is a space where touching is common place, belonging to our family of ‘familiar, frequently domesticated spaces’ where a sense of ‘safety, familiarity and security’ can be experienced (Howells, 2011: 3). Although Howells’ site provides this safe frame within which to operate, his expertise as a performer is what allows the content to be produced. A site that works in the performer’s favour is only half the battle when making relational work that requires dialogue; there has to be expertise in drawing conversation from one’s participant. During *Host* I hit walls of silence and awkwardness. These could perhaps be seen as the most authentic moments of the piece, where my interlocutor and I had actually stopped performing momentarily and started being real? As I have said, this is something I can neither prove nor support, but what I can do is point out its potential and frame this is a mechanic of social uncertainty produced in performance. With performances like *Host* where the interaction is one to one, albeit with

interjections from Woodcock and audience members, each conversation has to be felt out in situ with the individual. A series of observations take place where I use, as philosopher Susan Melrose might describe it, *expert intuition* to maintain the performance's potential, even when this means deliberately encouraging failure through props and techniques I know will not work, so in turn will 'work'. Failure as both a conceptual concern and practical mechanic can be seen to be at play once more here.

This point is reinforced by Heddon who writes in response to her personal participation in *Salon Adrienne*,

‘Whilst the difference at the heart of every “repeat” performance is a truism, every performance of Salon Adrienne is necessarily different. A skilful dramaturgical structure guarantees different degrees of intimacy/revelation and different textures, atmospheres, or moods. However, there is also an element of improvisation since Adrian cannot script the conversation in advance. He remains attentive to the moment, responding to and feeding off what is being said by his co-creator. The performance of Salon Adrienne that I am participating in, then, is made just for me because it is made with and by me, albeit in the capable, experienced hands of Adrian. I am put at ease. I am solicited, courted, consulted, included, engaged, heard, responded to, attended to This is bespoke theatre and as I leave the Salon I do feel really special. I have learned about Adrian, but I have also learned about myself. This is the value of exchange (Heddon, 2011: 4).

Host had no script but had a dramaturgical structure I had composed to ensure I could manage the situation with skilful improvisational methods and my experience of dialogical creation in performance. My dialogue with Participant 1 began in earnest with the request that she tell me something she hadn't told anyone else before. This request was the only scripted part of the piece, other than the tried and tested anecdotes of abject trauma that I had tested out in other performances previously, and which I knew I could use if my participants struggled to recall their own histories. The conversation with Participant 1 progressed with the awkwardness that many new conversations experience when two people who haven't met try to get to know each other. She fidgeted nervously as I moved the food around in the container I was feeding her from, both of us looking at each other whilst intermittently

looking out into the audience. I proceeded to engage in a dialogue with her that revealed thoughts about her past passion for dancing. She talked about family as her daughter watched on from the audience, becoming implicated in our playful scene.

There were moments during *Host* where conversation was laboured which created a different kind of awkwardness to that purposefully encouraged through playful interaction. It was when silence occurred that efforts had to be made to move the interaction to a more comfortable place. This need to fill the void with conversation troubled me as I performed *Host*. I had been interested in the exploration of the imagination as a place that becomes imbricated with one's physical location, but gaps occurred where there were opportunities to be silent and perhaps reflect on the questions we asked and thoughts we shared. During these moments I reverted back to the safety of humour to avoid a too greater sense of awkwardness. This reversion can be seen as masking unintended awkwardness with words. Indeed, Heddon observes the shift in Howells' performances where he himself 'radically' dropped 'the mask provided by "talking"', commenting that 'in shared silence, he found a different mode of risk-taking, communication and transformation' (Heddon, 2011: 2). Humour became our mask and in reflection I wonder about the potentials of silent hand feeding and where this interrelationality may have taken us.

With another participant (Participant 3 on the video document) my approach to the interaction was different to that with those preceding it. This participant didn't want to eat or be hand fed, decisions that subverted the etiquette of the piece. She also challenged my conversational performance skills due to her reticence. It was to be expected that not everybody would make my job easy, and part of my aim in *Host* was to explore levels of interaction that challenge our preconceived ideas of what it is to become social with another. In these situations, the performance calls for an improvised response using whatever and whoever are within the space. In the same way I use technologies clumsily and unnecessarily as methods of moving the performance along, I use audience members and the space itself in the same way. This method of spatial and technological illusion helps to navigate awkward situations. It is analogous to the performance we do in the city street when we see someone with a clipboard poised and ready to approach us. We will perhaps take out our mobile phone and feign a conversation, or at the very least adjust our path to avoid them. These strategies of spatial negotiation in everyday life happen in performance where the script, cast

list and scene order are absent and it is the performer who must think on her feet. I proceeded with my usual mode of questioning, reintroducing love as a method to forge intimacy. I asked Participant 3 when she last told someone she loved them but didn't mean it. It was at this point that she broke the one to one etiquette and involved someone she knew in the audience. This became a chance to take the performance in an interactive direction that would open the conversational potential and shift the interactive dynamic outwards to include the onlookers. The one to one mode broke down and the piece took a different but inclusive turn as others contributed to an improvised few minutes which I directed and ended when appropriate. There was a potential here for a kind of awkwardness that dislocated our stable roles within the situation. I adopted an awkwardness myself and invoked an uneasiness between myself and Woodcock to create further uncertainty within the situation.

Uneasiness became a mechanic that served to inform the improvisation thereafter. The dialogue with Participant 4 saw language exchanged and deconstructed in the live moment. Here the conversation began in the way that I have observed most social conversations do, with an introduction to where the participant was from. In a deviation from what I had come to expect from this line of questioning, Participant 4 wanted clarification as to what this meant. Woodcock asked again, but this time rephrased the question to ask where the participant lived now. He proceeded to ask where had he lived before this, and what had brought the participant here. "What brings us anywhere" was the intriguing but ambiguous response. It was clear that this particular conversation would need to be handled thoughtfully and in a different manner, indeed, each conversation took its own path and despite having a format and some stock questions and themes, each interlocution created its own form of bespoke theatre created for the individual, *with* the individual in the way Heddon comments Howells manages.

After confessing a story about living near a hotel and being able to see guests and employees in varying stages of undress, I once again began moral questioning using Participant 4 and Woodcock as my moral compasses. Our collective conversation became disjointed and fragmented as we tried to deconstruct the meaning of what we had said. I questioned my ethics in that live moment, asking my participant if it was OK to participate in this illicit act of voyeurism. Rather than focus on the subject matter, Participant 4 chose to ask questions of a wider ethics whilst Woodcock played creatively with the actual words spoken rather than the actions and thoughts I had described. We were emphatic in our body language and our

hands gesticulated as we broke our words down to the point where misrecognition had denied any hope of debating the ethics of my confession. In the confession of my own histories to a stranger in front of the camera, I once again confronted the ethics of conversational exchange and the equity of dialogue in performance.

The interaction I had with Participant 4 needed a different kind of care compared to those before him. I sensed in him a hesitation and uncertainty which I could either turn into a positive engagement or exploit for the sake of exploring awkwardness. As I have stated, our day-to-day conversations with those we meet for the first time will often contain moments of awkwardness, intimacy, explorations of proximity and body language, and I have explored these mechanics throughout this research, but *Host* brought me much closer physically to my participants than any other previous pieces and it was this proximity that demanded a closer negotiation of performance methods and responsibility. In *Hello, I Love You* I had the safety of the 20-metre distance between me and my participants to play with, and whilst we were joined by a rope and a mobile phone, I had the ability to end the call at any point if things became uncomfortable. Doing this would have failed my commitment to those who had agreed to sit opposite me, but by not being able to see into their eyes we could be somehow alleviated of potential discomfort. In *Host* I, didn't have this luxury. My participants were facing me and expecting something from me and I had to very quickly work out the character of each one as best I could and thereafter adapt the dynamics of the piece to suit. I experienced moments of discomfort with participant 4 due to their vulnerability in the performance situation, and I saw it as my responsibility to manage this as I got to know them.

This was achieved using several performance methods that I had experimented with previously. In the first moments of welcoming Participant 4 to the space there was some audience intervention. An audience member decided to heckle, and upon my retaliation we entered a fractured dialogue that served to divert attention by putting the focus on the audience member who had intervened rather than my participant. Several other tactics were used to interact with Participant 4 in efforts to become social with him. I created character dynamics for the three of us, feigning the premise that he and Woodcock had created some sort of bond and that I was somehow outside of this union. I knew this didn't feel like the case but I also knew that by playing on my insecurities I could perhaps take away some of my own authority and perceived sense of power and ownership of the situation, providing an antidote to hospitality's 'one-way-ness' (Massey, 2005: 194).

In the moments where we had no participants Woodcock was required to read out the text he had constructed from overheard from the conversations between me and my participants. He was also required to include his own observations and questions. I asked that he both read and write from first and third person perspectives, echoing earlier methods explored in *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* and *Performing Criticism*. His role was to both interject, interact and take notes from the conversations. I gave him no other brief than this, but I was interested in seeing what the perception of the piece from someone both on the inside and the outside would look like, both to understand my part in the work and what conversational elements I used, but also to see how what I had said had been perceived by an onlooker. By becoming an audience member during these moments I had the ability to hear what I had said. In a method reminiscent of that used in *Performing Criticism* where I recorded audience criticism and attempted to narrate alongside side it to create a multi-authored vocalisation of a shared experience, here too a tactic was employed that would give me an insight into my my attempt to become social through the eyes of another. In a later analysis of the full text that Woodcock had written, this insight would be understood further. This text can be seen below, with emboldened sections revealing the moments within the text where questions were asked. These questions were asked by both Woodcock, myself and my participants, and, like with previous works, this text becomes a performative document in its own right, activating moments in the act of reading it that allow me to remember those I engaged with.

Woodcock wrote:

Happy? Good.

Feeding tigers.

This is the scene.

Always something happening.

The chili tastes good.

Have you got a big pan?

Yeah I have got a big pan.

I need a piss now.

Fucking hell! Newspaper.

Chicken wire.

Space.
Small clouds of dust.
A semi. Detached.
Retina.
Flush.
Tap.
Yeah done that.
Clopping horses.
Shoes. Italian.
See if I can get one of those two out of the cage.
Wine.
Taped up breasts.
Gumo. Mine!
People.
Where is this going?
Woman's.
What does he think he will achieve by this?
I feel a lot better.
Do you think about it?
Workshop.
Thank you.
Not hungry.
Anonymous.
Listen.
He is asking her to listen in 3 minutes.
What kind of thing you want to know?
My parents - they count.
Psychoanalyze me.
Clap.
Naked bodies.
Toilet.
How many people are in that toilet?
Women dressed as tigers!
I am good thanks.

Don't get pissed.

Do you know what she said?

Hahahahahahahahahahaha.

I can tell you about here and the city but I can't tell you about that.

Really?

Well-made isn't it?

Toilet is full but the confession is empty.

I only eat chicken. I don't like red meat.

Are you in rush?

No. No. No names. Anonymous.

I am here on a rare night out with my daughter.

My daughter went in.

I've not been.

Are you hungry?

Okay thank you.

This is difficult.

I am not that easy.

Typing.

Yeah.

If you can hold this...

What is he doing?

Can I feed you?

He is getting intimate.

I haven't been fed since I was a baby!

Seven seconds.

Is it nice?

You tell me, I think so.

It is a good toilet.

Blow it.

Hmm.

Sharing a confession.

Have a think.

Mmm.

You might not feel you have told anybody now.

*I have no secrets.
I am a very open person.
Healthy.
Something to do with a tune.
Sounds like an advert to me.
But I don't watch TV so have no idea.*

*A sort of rhythm.
Enough man.
Steve seems upset.
Curry. Now look, now look.*

Why am I here?
*I am now waiting for food.
That is delicious.
Puppets on strings dude.
What takes anybody anywhere?*

*Anonymous.
What is weird?
That's right.*

Do you know what I mean?
*Anonymous.
One chickpea.*

If I had?
Vegetarianism.

*Mmm.
What do you mean by it?
Are you in it together?*

*Bad is...
That is putting meaning into it.
Good question though.*

Is it funny?
*That's what's fueled it - a single chickpea.
It is part of the big picture.*

*Yes.
If he needs them I have got his chick peas.*

These girls are hungry, feed them.
Tigers have gone.
Extinct.
Gordon Matta Clark - mixing food and conversation.
They've gone now.
It's a weird space to do stuff in - with all the lighting...
It's what it is, it's what it is.
Smoke.
I am gonna feed people in a bit and then people will feel lighter.
I just had a fantasy about the girl in the lift.
I once had a friend - a best friend - for four years who I was in love with but he didn't love
me.
He has gone shopping, left me here, alone, next to a fucking toilet.
It's not what we expected.
But that's a good thing isn't it?
One pound for a can opener seems to have cheered him up.
There are a lot of people around.
Who are they?
Who will sit for him?
Not for him - for themselves.
He's cooking right now.
Chilli.
No license to cook elsewhere - be careful of the toilet.
Part of the piece.
He can be really crude, or is he?
I was talking about him today with a colleague.
He says it's short-cutting to the truth - truth though - what's that?
It's what he's short cutting to.
'You know what you've got to do'
Tap the screen.
What is so unnecessary?
Sounds like you're in a box.
Just like being in a box.
What is his obsession with boxes, or is it his honest observation of his surroundings?

His can opener is 'shit' - gone to Tesco to buy another one.

France.

Twenty to... I don't want more.

Vodaphone.

Mobile phone.

What is your relationship with your friend?

It is from my bath.

We have missed out.

People are not going.

I will give that a go.

Rolling.

I hate Leicester.

I am new to using a machine like this and I do not know why I am here.

I am being observed now.

Chewing gum.

Fresh breath, got a sore throat and I am knackered.

I vomited in a toilet before seeing the pixies at the Apollo.

I carried on.

I am excited about them still doing gigs.

We are the same age.

Your hands are cold.

Lots of problems.

They are always cold.

Lipstick.

She is enjoying being fed.

He is enjoying feeding her.

Lovely.

Ambient sounds.

Goofy feet.

Lull. Lull.

Just eating.

There is a lull

People want more.

Are you hungry?

*Nope forks.
A couple of weeks ago.
I am put off.
Your tongue's gone yellow.
My hair is a little bit ginger.
And I have to trim it.
Not about ginger pubes.
I would like to smash u in the face.*

Do I?

*Right when I didn't mean it.
Probably him over there.
Yesterday.
Anonymous best friend.*

What is he getting at?

*Busiest toilet.
Taking minutes.*

Am I?

*I don't know exactly what his thoughts are at present.
He is not here to observe.
That is, assuming, that one can deduce thought through the act of observation.
I would love to.*

Is this nice?

*Mmm.
It is fine.
Absolutely fine.
I have had enough thank you.
Anonymous.
It is.
Toto.*

Are you hungry?

*Back in minute.
Sculpture.
Clay.
Body.*

Abstract.

Gives the viewer a sense of discomfort.

Recognizing the unrecognizable or the uncomfortable.

Lumpy.

Latex.

Expanding foam.

Body size.

No.

She thought she had a thief - she doesn't have a thief.

Tigers.

Middlesex.

Lincoln.

Trent.

I teach performance.

Fine art.

Sculpture.

Whose body?

It is really nice.

Will Smith.

Okay right.

Moving on.

Three weeks ago.

It is alright.

Casting.

Psychogeography.

She didn't say anything about it.

I wish I had not put as much food in this tray.

You go away.

What has happened to you?

Please I am hungry.

I thought I'd farted but it was worse than that.

It I wasn't a good shit yourself.

Now you take this away.

Exercise does that.

I am not gonna make you confess.

That's marvellous.

Thank you.

He is talking shit now.

He has had a small amount.

Come on.

Come and sit down.

One fingered typing.

Chocolate finger.

Anonymous.

Never mind that Julian.

I am not talking into the microphone.

I feel a bit uncomfortable.

They are your parameters.

I have parameters too.

You couldn't have heard this story before.

It is alright isn't it?

I didn't use the megaphone.

No name.

Invading the toilet.

Why is he heavy-breathing?

How about now?

Hello.

I don't think it's working.

Try touching that.

No you are not touching it in the right way.

I used to wank in the toilets in the shoe shop.

I have done that.

That is out the way now.

I am not talking into that microphone.

Go. Go. Go. Go. Go.

Steve is looking nervous.

*I am wondering why Steve is drinking wine so casually when someone may say something
very sensitive and serious.*

Variety is the spice of life.

I can't stop laughing.

Quite good, but slow.

I will be watching your face quite closely.

Look! Look! No - use your Green Cross Code.

What's that?

Something from the seventies.

Plastic cutlery. Chili. Chick peas. Cans in a case.

Laugh.

Really?

Sorry. Oh - it doesn't matter.

Originally...

I need to share something with you.

Is this wrong?

Flush

This is my first introduction to performance art.

I was a 45-year-old ballet dancer.

It made me feel alive, just letting go.

I have got 4 children.

I started when I was four.

Trying.

Knocked back.

Try.

30.

Lots of little children.

16 years.

Can somebody zip me up please?

Feedback.

Are you okay?

Come and sit down.

Come on. It is not mine.

Breathing.

Listen.

Anonymous.

Good thanks.

Thick curry soup.

Yeah.

It's a good toilet.

After I have finished with her.

That is the way it should be.

Just join the crowd you know.

You write fuck all!

They are not. No.

Why should I?

Fuck off?

You are making me feel rather uncomfortable.

I don't think you are sorry.

You are.

Oh no.

Steve why?

Phew.

She has taken it like the tiger.

I have got children.

You spill?

Connected - what thing?

Something.... Mmm...

What?

Yes.

Here we go.

I am.

A girl at work is...

My wine.

She has got no hours but she is leaving.

One shift a week.

I am at uni.

Nottingham Trent.

Journalism.

I do.

It is a secret.

You know nothing.

Anonymous.

Anonymous brought me here.

Do you want me to feed you?

Look at these hot juicy chickpeas.

If you say something I will put it in your mouth.

Wanking or shit yourself.

That is just everyday life.

Here is the place to do this.

When was the last time?

Let me just fiddle with my bra strap.

When I was nine.

I sort of forgot I wanted to go to the toilet and I shit myself in my pants.

I wasn't out on my own.

I was on drugs.

I shat myself.

In the toilet in the pub.

Hid them full of shit, guilty to this day.

Sorry been there.

Cleaners!

Grammar.

Spelling.

Punctuation

Women's legs.

Pins.

Needlework.

Sexism.

Man's crotch?

Hang on I got a text.

Wait.

One mouthful.

Yes, Steven.

Wine distribution.

Grapes.
He is listening.
People are not easily pleased.
Slow burn.
Every Sunday.
In the way.
The Milky Way.
Chocolate.
Chocolate fingers.
Tigers.
Tuck.
Tux biscuits.
How was it?
Brian enjoy.
This could be good.
Do tigers speak English?
I am going to stop using inverted commas because it is too long winded.
Food.
It's my fault for moving away.
Laugh
Phone me
Are you alright?
I am here to confess live.
It is an invitation.
Go to the loo.
Lease.
Chocolate finger.
You see people you know but you just don't recognize them.
Ah! Shit!
Don't lie.
Come back!
Applause.
Whoop whoop.
Clopping clip.

Always performing.
It is great.
Use the toilet.
I am fed up of hearing about the toilet.
I do not know why I am here.
Are you hungry?
No.
Yep.
I'm crying a bit though.

This fractious list of questions, utterances, thoughts and observations adds another layer to my experience of performing *Host*. These words allow my present experience of *Host* – that embodied by my memory of it – to interact with the performance as a historical event written about by someone who was there observing me and being part of my conversations. My use of the reworked criticisms of others as performative additions and supports to the performances to which they refer is a method of mnemonically performing with past participants, acknowledging that ‘what is remembered, and how it is remembered is always subject to the concerns of the present’ (Wilkie, 2002b: 8, cited in Pearson, 2010: 57). *Host* stripped away all technological layers and tactics of disruption to concentrate purely on the action of hand feeding in exchange for being present with participants in conversation. Previous work had explored voyeuristic distance and the sharing of fantasy. It had focussed on one to one conversation about love undertaken at a safe distance from my interlocutors. I had sent others out into spaces to explore what love might be when entered into with strangers without their knowledge. All these gestures were performances whose intention was to research how the mechanics of becoming social with others can be articulated through layers of action, technology, thought and conversation understood through a site-specific frame. *Host* and *Host(s)* were final attempts to provide some answers and produce some findings which the conclusion to this research discusses below.

Conclusion

This doctoral submission offers the field of site-specific performance a body of work that interweaves performances and their documentation with accompanying text that combines creative and theoretical writing. It offers new insights into what becoming social might mean when viewed through the lens of a performance practice. A methodology that ‘thinks’ about performance studies and human geography by ‘doing’ performance synthesises key themes and conceptual concerns including site, place, space, autobiography, intimacy, proximity, confession, dialogue, hospitality, failure and interrelationality to form an original enquiry.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the research questions outlined at the start of the thesis. I began by asking the core question ‘how can becoming social be framed as a site-specific process when realised through particular performance mechanics?’, with the sub-questions ‘how, through positioning site as a process rather than fixed location, can the material of place, space and human experience become imbricated to produce new insights into interrelationality?’, and, ‘what does this imbrication reveal about the potentials of intimacy and proximity in the context of site-specific performance and social space?’. My methodology brought together the observational and voyeuristic practices of artists including Acconci and Calle in synthesis with the anthropological and social science perspectives of Austin, Massey, Perec, Goffman and Augé. This synthesis has resulted in a body of work which articulates, among other findings, how the observation of people in public can become the initial stimuli to activate shifts in an understanding of social space and the potentials of performativity thereof/therein. It has shown how new ways of creating one to one performances, performance lectures, texts and video documents can be generated through practice as research, in turn offering studies into practice as research a new model for discussion.

As an example of how site-specificity and ethnography can be imbricated to contribute to the field of performance, *A Café and a Moment of Eye Contact* and *Redefining a Sense of Place*’s findings demonstrate how material created through methods of observation in social space can become material for performance that both reveals artistic insights into the social situations in which the observations are made and how the experience of a space and its phenomena reveals further insights when brought before an audience through the mode of the performance lecture. What can be seen here is a process whose performance mechanics

themselves become findings in/as practice that in this conclusion are presented as instructions which I offer to the field as a conclusion and provocation. I anticipate that these instructions act as both a summarised overview of the practical steps I took in the making of the research and a set of instructions that others in the field might attempt to follow:

1. Go and conduct a ‘particular kind of fieldwork’. The kind I am referring to involves observing others in public space, a method akin to the practices of the ethnographers written about above. Observations should take place over several occasions in the same place.
2. Make your observations into documentational texts which can be understood as categorised thus:
 - a. *Descriptive*: methods akin to those of Perec’s, where events are described as you see them.
 - b. *Confessional*: personal and diaristic in tone, using autobiographical modes. Say, write and document what you feel and what your inner voices say to you. You have a greater poetic license here.
3. Capture other material from the fieldwork:
 - a. Video documentation of everyday movements in the space.
 - b. Sounds heard in the space, conversations etc.
4. Edit observational material, analyse it and show it to an audience. The editing process can involve video editing, sound editing, cutting and pasting the text-based material to make new text. This can and should be as creative as it needs to be.
5. The video, sound and observational text becomes performance material which can be performed in the mode of the performance lecture. Essentially see what happens when you spend an hour or so before an audience bringing all these technological and elements together with your spoken reflections.

The above process maps the initial performance mechanics that were developed from my research in social spaces with the public. My research found that through improvising with the projected video material of the place I was recalling (café: site of fieldwork), alongside the sound recordings of conversations recorded in that space, I could recall the experience of being with others in that space, but what is more, I was able to reveal moments that connected me more intimately to others in public space. These moments are what I describe as thought acts and which I position as performative in the Austinian sense that they change

the social situation rather than describe it. What can be seen here is a model of site-specificity played out in performance where places and times are imbricated through the actions of the performer and his documentational material. My initial positioning of site posits it as a process, concept and discursive phenomena rather than geographic location or coordinate on a map, and this mode of phenomenal imbrication speaks to this position, a position I support through Kaye's writing on site-specificity bringing together conceptual positions of site with performance mechanics in an original way.

The model of becoming social that I have built here includes those observed in public, me as the observer, and the audience I recall my experience to. The audience is important in that they figure in my process as contributors to the formation of a collective social positioning – the findings speaking to the conceptual concerns which offer new potentials of interrelationality through performance practice. This becomes material via the following means, which again dear reader you are invited to go and do should you wish:

1. Deliver the performance lecture, and once finished, ask the audience for feedback.
2. Record and analyse the feedback. The analysis reveals knowledge of the performer, the performance situation and the social situations that generated the initial findings.
3. Amplify the recorded feedback and speak along with the voices who criticised you.

Through the convergence of all these players and events (performer, audience, people observed in social space, social space itself etc.) a site is produced whose participants, date, time and location are uncertain and unstable. The piece *Performing Criticism* played on this multi-authorial/multi-spatial site-specificity through the act of combining materials. The amplification of a previous audience's voices, combined with the projection of video footage of the performer receiving feedback, combined with the same performer making efforts to read along with the recorded voices in real time plays between social-subjects-absent and social- subjects-present. This interplay of participating and not participating, watching and being watched, speaking and being spoken about demonstrate a new model of interrelationality and are given contextual support by my provocations of Kester's claims to essential face to face contact in dialogical art, and through my mobilisation of Augé's calls for an ethnology of solitude.

The combination of absent and present social subjects, documentary materials and live/mediated bodies as seen in *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* further develops the performance mechanics outlined above through the performance lecture. The inclusion of live web-streamed bodies in social space adds to this process, with conceptual concerns that speak to the manipulation and management of failure and the potentials for thought acts to stimulate actions of caretaking given breath through practice here. This performance offers the field a mechanics of becoming social which I conclude again in instructions for you dear reader to follow:

1. Gather performance materials (video, audio, text) from previous performances and bring them to a new location, before a new audience in a process of reiteration.
2. Use your tried and tested confessional texts from previous performances and rework and reiterate them, this time with the inclusion of a live streaming of the location you are speaking about projected into your performance space.
3. Employ technological elements (live stream) that might fail, causing audience members to intervene and save the performance. You will see interventions of care as consequential thought acts.
4. Build caretaking and co-hosting into the performance through elements whose success will be uncertain; here you are inviting failure which you will manage:
 - a. Use live streaming, Skype and other methods that are fraught with problems.
 - b. Use 3 projections whose screensavers need activating intermittently which will disrupt the flow of the videos being projected.
 - c. Give texts to audience members to read, knowing they will be unable to read them due to the 'cut-up' technique used to construct them.

The insights seen here and established through *Finding Forms in Dialogic Space* also speak to concepts around the ontology of proximity: by bringing a collection of people together across live and recorded, near and far, present and absent distances, and through sharing histories and working together to maintain a situation whose tacit agreements we all shared, the research reveals the potential of the performance lecture in articulating togetherness. Massey's writing on togetherness and Braidotti's ideas of being 'in this together' underpin the optimistic potential of social space that this research presents.

Walking Through The Field saw the performance lecture mode developed further, this time revealing the potential of more sustained drifts into the world of fantasy and what it is to imagine one's position alongside others in space. This piece also saw the act of 'place naming' used as a mechanic of self-orientation. Just as a *Café and a Moment of Eye Contact*, *Redefining a Sense of Place*, and *Performing Criticism* all demonstrate methods of orienting oneself in social space with others, *Walking Through The Field* explored the use of the naming of places in conversation with others as a mechanic of social interrelationality. Drifting through places, both physically through walking together and mentally through talking together, demonstrated how new performance mechanics can be employed to bring people together and how these mechanics allow a rethinking of what it is to be interrelational.

Both *Hello, I Love You* and *Falling in Love Again - and Again* played with the composition of collective fantasies written over the realities of being with others in space. *Hello, I Love You* saw the sharing of intimate personal histories on a one to one level between performer and participant, but within these conversations that contained recollections of love and loss, the performer made attempts to fall in love with the participant in an act of belief-suspension and fantasy. As soon as participants confessed their love for others, I would intervene and ask if I could fall in love with them. What we see here is performance used to overlay real love with a performed love. However, as the email from one of my participants demonstrated, the intimacy that our conversation and our proximity to one another generated made notions of fact and fiction hard to delineate. *Falling in Love Again - and Again's* challenge to participants to find a stranger to fall in love with anonymously plays both on early ideas of orienting oneself through one's real and imagined relationships with others, but also how places become prominent factors in our building of relationships, even if they are relationships built anonymously. As one my participants demonstrated in his imaginings, the mind will wander to the point where it even imagines the destination that the object of the fantasy and the fantasist would go on holiday to. A synthesis of human geography and performance studies can be seen anew here as the practice demonstrates how dialogue allows the performer and his participant to drift through unstable concepts of place interrelationally.

What these experiments reveal is how places, both real and imagined, are used in conversation to stabilise both one's recollection of experiences *and* the experience of being in conversation with someone new. As I pointed out however, the memory distorts the facts of experience, and what my research demonstrated through is how intimacy and proximity

function as concepts to develop interrelationalities across places and times simultaneously with fact and fiction imbricated. Here site is specific to whatever and wherever the conversation takes the conversationalists. Our emotional borders are crossed as we let our guard down to let a stranger in, and as these borders are crossed, our stable sense of self is exposed in its interrelational construction.

Host and *Host(s)* brought together all the elements I had been with working with over the duration of the research. This included intimacy through conversation, physical proximity, movement between times and places through dialogue, the misuse of technologies to create awkwardness, the illusion of clumsy uncertainty in performance, the projection of and interaction with text, and confessional and autobiographical sharing of personal histories. These works introduced Haynes to the reader to support an exploration of how the concepts of hosting and care might figure in the mechanics of becoming social. Morin's writing on Derrida provided contextual support here, with thresholds tested and borders breeched as my questions around intimacy and proximity through movement between places and histories were answered through practice.

New approaches to the use and understanding of how confession and site-specific performance interrelate are demonstrated throughout the research. I bring together Hind's use of confession in *Peep* and Howell's use of confessional dialogue to explore the conversational material of confession, as a well as the actions of the body as a confessional object operating through touch. Referring to the work of Pinchbeck, Parry, Kelly et al I explored the mechanics of confessing through the body, through words on the page and through conversation itself to bring together the confessor, the confessed to and the reader together in a process of becoming social that further blurs the line between the audience and the audience-participant. Heddon's writing on autobiographical performance underpin the research here.

What is seen in *Host* and *Host(s)* is an example of a performance practice that incorporates and speaks to the questions and conceptual concerns of the thesis in the following ways, which here are again presented as instructions to follow:

1. Invite strangers to sit in close proximity to you, one to one.

2. Asks participants if you can hand feed them food you have lovingly cooked in exchange for confessions and personal autobiographical histories (you will have to cook the food live at the site for full effect).
3. Proceed to hand feed participants, crossing physical borders in an intimate act whilst engaging in conversation.
4. Intersperse your own confessions, embarrassments and tales of abject trauma at intervals to become closer by leaving nothing unsaid. See if others do the same.
5. Observe as places and times are recalled and written-over the site of the performance in a process of site-specific imbrication.

This use of confessional mechanics plays with humour and brings to performance an interrelational aesthetic where the performer and participant are physically present and face to face, but who drift into thought and memory, staring both into space and out into the audience of onlookers as they drift. Serious and meaningful thoughts are shared in these works, but this is a confessional performativity that doesn't take itself too seriously until it needs to. The ethics of participant engagement thought through in new ways here as the field is offered a set of performance mechanics where the performer puts his own honesty on the table as a gesture of trust, taking care of his participants by expertly reading what they are prepared to say and what they want to keep for themselves. The potential for documentational failure caused by giving the role of cameraperson over to an audience member further frames the exploration of trust.

This research set out to add new and substantial insights to performance through a practical exploration of a focussed set of aims, questions and actions which mobilised theories across performance studies and the social sciences. The research questioned how a site-specific framework might be applied to a practical exploration of becoming social through performance. It at once asked questions of the potentials of our interconnectedness, but at the same time articulated the problems, awkwardness and uncertainties of what it is to share social space and what interrelationality might mean in age of social identities mediated through proximities both near and far, analogue and digital.

And finally...

In the Leuven 10th Anniversary Lecture in 2016, Bourriaud discussed relational aesthetics and what has changed since he first wrote around this subject over ten years previously. He commented that ‘fluxes and networks (of people) are more important than places’ in a time when there are no longer such definitive ‘binaries between higher and lower cultural hierarchies’ (Bourriaud, 2016), where one place is no longer necessarily any more important than another. Through an ethnological framing, he comments how this field of social science was historically about sending an expert to a place to bring back information, documents and material about the other. What has changed in the present time is how the other is defined, with binaries no longer existing. It is here where Bourriaud talks about social networks and where his comments are useful to the conclusion of this thesis.

Bourriaud notes that ‘everyone has become a reporter’ and the representation of one’s identity is produced through a continuous process of sharing ‘images of reality’ as a ‘collective collaboration’ (2016). Massey’s prescient comments in *For Space* speak to a time where becoming social with others is more complex than ever. This thesis combines these concerns with Augé’s cautionary comments on mass information and cultural consciousness but with an optimistic resonance that celebrates the potential of social cohesion in an age of indeterminate modes and platforms of social connectivity. By exploring the proximities, intimacies, dialogues and technologies of our social togetherness, reinforced by a site-specificity that allows place to be porous and in turn open to the inclusion of any others, I have added to the field of performance practical mechanics that have social interrelationality and creativity at their heart.

From here I will work the mechanics of becoming social that I have developed into instructions for further performance making and performance teaching. The instructions in the conclusion are a method for becoming social through performance art. You will follow them in the same way I did, and although this will connect us, we will produce different results. They are like a recipe and act as steps to building a dish that will taste slightly different every time. This body of work draws together practices and theories in an original way as a contributor of knowledge to the field of site-specific performance, demonstrating a clear set of ways that theory can be mobilised in practice. Here are new ways of understanding intimate sited practices and ways of undertaking processes that engage with intimate Performance, in turn articulating Practice as Research in an original way. I hope too that colleagues across other fields can use these findings in ways that encourage dialogue

between strangers, this way the process of becoming social will go on and we will see greater social cohesion at a time when we really need it.

Steve Fossey, 2017.

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